

**DREW WESTEN CONSIDERS THE
DEMS' GUN CONTROL PROBLEM**

**HOLLYWOOD VALUES WILL
CLEAN UP AMERICA YET!**

**OUR SUMMER
BOOKS ISSUE**

THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

**MIDEAST PERSPECTIVES FROM
ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, FLYNT
LEVERETT, GERSHOM GORENBERG,
ROBERT DREYFUSS, CHRIS PATTEN,
SHLOMO BEN-AMI & MANY MORE**

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

THE MIDEAST ISSUE

**MAPPING A NEW DIRECTION IN THE
WORLD'S MOST EXPLOSIVE REGION**

JUNE 2007

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THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 6 JUNE 2007

*"O my dear they are making
such a horrible muddle of the
Near East."*

— GERTRUDE BELL, WRITING TO
A FRIEND FROM (AND ABOUT)
THE 1919 PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

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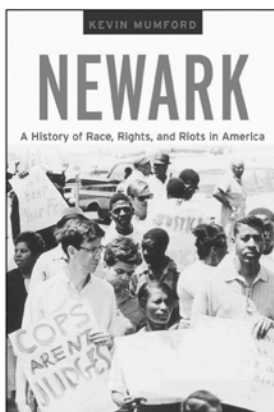
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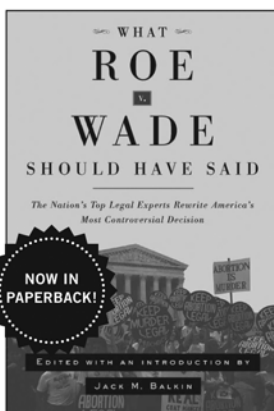
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NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION Big Top Newsstand Services, a division of the IPA, (415) 445-0230 or fax (415) 445-0231 or e-mail bigtop@indypress.org

PRESS SYNDICATION Agence Global, (336) 686-9002

REPRINTS permissions@prospect.org

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Tax and Spend

A HALLMARK OF THE BUSH ERA HAS BEEN THE systematic assault on government. The relentless removal of public dollars has not only crippled program after program, but the politics of permanent deficit has actually impaired the Democratic imagination. This was,

of course, by design. The attack on the public sector now dates back 26 years to the beginning of the Reagan era and beyond, to Jimmy Carter's tepid support for government. It only very modestly reversed under Bill Clinton.

Meeting the deferred needs of this republic will take serious money. These needs include big-ticket items such as energy independence, early-childhood education, and restored investment in public infrastructure. But the premise that the federal cupboard is bare limits the Democrats to token outlays and renders big systemic reforms fiscally unthinkable.

As economist Henry Aaron of the Brookings Institution remarked, however, at a recent Economic Policy Institute (EPI) forum on budget politics, "There isn't any other long-term budget problem, aside from that emanating from the growth of health-care spending." He added that reforming Medicare is impossible without reforming the health-care system as a whole.

The way to big cost savings in health care would be, paradoxically, to move to universal coverage. That reform would cut so much waste and profiteering that it would allow the United States to gradually cut health-care costs from their current level of nearly 15 percent of the gross domestic product to something closer to the European average of 9 percent. But universal coverage would shift perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars of annual spending from the private sector into the federal budget.

And if Democrats believe that such a scale of new public outlay is inconceivable, we will be left with a politics of chronic crisis, in which our overly privatized insurance system keeps shifting costs to consumers, cutting benefits, crippling Medicare, and inflicting uncompetitive costs on American industry.

I RECENTLY WROTE IN THESE PAGES OF the excessive influence of Robert Rubin and kindred Wall Street Democrats, who commend budget balance as the top priority for Democrats. These budget hawks are wrong economically and wrong politically, wrong about the sources of the Clinton boom and wrong about the fiscal strategy needed in this decade. [See "Friendly Takeover," *TAP*, April 2007]

The Clinton boom had little to do with deficit reduction. The high growth of the 1990s resulted from rising productivity rates, due chiefly to computerization's effects on both manufacturing and services. As well, increased trade depressed industry's ability to raise prices and workers' ability to win higher wages, so the Federal Reserve concluded that higher growth need not be inflationary. The Fed's low interest rates stimulated a speculative boom. Budget balance was largely irrelevant.

An incoming Democratic administration in 2009 would face a fiscal situation similar to the one Clinton inherited in 1993: a large deficit resulting from Republican tax cuts for the rich, depleted social spending, and a weakening economy. Like Clinton, a new Democratic president would be counseled by Wall Street that budget discipline is paramount. A preview of that argument is in a recent paper ("Why Deficits Matter") by the Democratic Leadership Council. In it, economist Austan Goolsbee blasts Bush mainly for the size of the deficit, yet says next to nothing about its causes or uses (tax cuts for the rich, increased war spending, reduced social outlay).

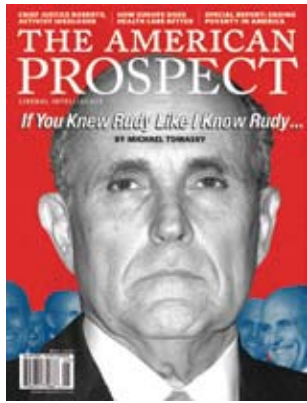
But restored growth, distributed more equitably, is the cure for past debt. That in turn requires public investments. As Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz said at the same recent EPI forum, fiscal contraction could "risk the economy having a more significant slowdown." Stiglitz added: "There is a wide agenda facing our society, important priorities that need to be addressed that will require expenditures. And the value of spending has to be weighed against the cost of any deficit." With so much private "investment"

going for repurchases of stock and rearrangements of corporate assets, public outlay today often produces more productivity gains than private investment does.

We definitely need to repeal Bush's tax cuts on the wealthiest, but we need that money to restore public programs to benefit Americans, not to balance the budget. The *Prospect* will be challenging the fiscal hawks on the Democratic center-right to an ongoing debate at www.prospect.org. Progressives and Democrats need to have this argument well before the 2008 election and blow away a lot of economic myths, so that the next Democratic president is not sandbagged, as Clinton was, by bond traders claiming that budget balance is necessary to appease Wall Street. **TAP**

— ROBERT KUTTNER

*The cure for
past debt
is restored,
and more
equitable,
growth.*



Not Just Southern

AS HAROLD MEYERSON points out, ["Wal-Mart Comes North," April 2007] the resistance encountered by the big retailer in Chicago, Los Angeles, and other metropolitan regions constitutes but the latest battle waged between the low-wage, non-union Southern brand of U.S. capitalism and those elements of the polity that seek to sustain the labor standards and regulatory norms first put in place by the New Deal. But it would be a mistake to identify Wal-Mart's current posture simply with an unreconstructed South. Instead, Wal-Mart, along with Target, K-Mart, Home Depot, and the other big box merchants, represent something even more significant: the rise of the historically low-wage, low-benefit retail sector to the commanding heights of U.S. capitalism, where these retailers now wield the market power to squeeze or force offshore those manufacturing and transport firms that once provided the favorable social terrain upon which potent unions and a liberal, interventionist state could flourish.

A visit to Wal-Mart headquarters in Bentonville, AR, will graphically confirm this new reality. There, Colgate

Palmolive, Walt Disney, and some 700 other "vendors" have established branch offices, staffed by thousands of young, transplanted cosmopolitans from New York and similar venues. Like supplicants before the king, they seek favor and fortune from this new sovereign that can make and break towns and companies around the world.

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN
Professor of History
UC Santa Barbara

Creeping Libertarianism

I WAS DISTRESSED TO READ Melvin Konner's review of Michael Sandel's book, *The Case Against Perfection* [May 2007]. His review does not accurately or adequately sketch Sandel's position before proceeding to denounce it. Konner misses the really critical questions about bioethics that Sandel tried to raise. (Full disclosure: I have taught bioethics in a course run jointly by Michael Sandel and a professor of stem cell biology.)

Konner relies on very dubious presuppositions which account for his giving short shrift to Sandel's arguments and his failing to appreciate the progressive case against some of the new biotechnologies. He assumes that it is up to parents to do what they want to their children: "It's their kid and their money," as he puts it bluntly. He adopts, without making explicit, the idea that a libertarian, market-driven individualism is the proper orientation for public policy and morality. I disagree with both these assumptions, and I suspect that a

great majority of *TAP* readers would similarly. Out with philosophy and in with private preferences and market transactions, declares Konner, without explaining why we ought to agree. *TAP* owes its readers a more thoughtful discussion of these issues.

DAVID GREWAL
Ph.D. Candidate,
Government Department
Harvard University

Correction: In his column, "Is Rising Inequality Revers-

ible?" [May 2007] Paul Starr referred to the total income of the 300,000 Americans who make up the "top 1 percent." In fact, 300,000 equals the "top 0.1 percent," or the "top tenth of the top 1 percent" of the U.S. population.

Letters to the editor should be sent to letters@prospect.org or mailed to The Editors, The American Prospect, 2000 L St., NW, Suite 717, Washington, D.C. 20036.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE MIDDLE EAST—BY ANY MEASURE, THE WORLD'S powder keg—was already beset by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the rise of fundamentalist Islam when the Bush administration came along to add its own distinctive touch: a disastrous war that has destroyed much of Iraq (not just Saddam's Iraq, but the possibility of civilized life in Iraq), strengthened the fundamentalists, and estranged damn near the entire region and most other parts of the planet. Add to that the administration's unwillingness (until quite recently) to help Israelis and Palestinians allay their agonies, its intermittent saber-rattling at Iran, and its faith-based neoconservatism, and it's clear that the United States needs to radically revamp our Middle Eastern policy if we are to salvage both our interests and our ideals.

This month, the *Prospect* devotes most of our issue to advancing new perspectives and policies for the Middle East. Our articles explain the roots of some crucial Middle East dilemmas (Gershom Gorenberg on Israel's occupation, Robert Dreyfuss on Iraq's Shiite parties, Anthony David on neoconservatism) and advocate new U.S. approaches to particular nations (Ray Takeyh on Iran, Steven Simon on Saudi Arabia). Shlomo Ben-Ami and, in a separate piece, advisers to Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak, and Yasir Arafat at the 2000 Camp David talks (Robert Malley, Daniel Levy, and Ghaith al-Omari, respectively) lay out a path to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Flynt Leverett advises the next president on how best to get out of Iraq. Chris Paten, the former EU commissioner for external affairs, provides a European perspective. And Zbigniew Brzezinski provides a new roadmap for U.S. policy across the entire region—where, it's abundantly evident, the United States urgently needs to start getting things right.

Also: Our Web site, www.prospect.org, was revamped in early May. It's vastly expanded, more provocative, utterly authoritative, and considerably spiffier. Check it out.

— HAROLD MEYERSON

Up Front



PARTY POOPERS

LIBERAL BLOGGERS WAGING WAR ON WHAT THEY CALL “cocktail-weenie journalism” should cheer the latest move by *The New York Times*. Following a heated argument at the *Times* table during the annual White House Correspondents Association awards dinner between *Times* guest Karl Rove and singer Sheryl Crow—which was, embarrassingly, first reported in a competing paper—*The Times* decided to pull out of the annual bore-fest, known colloquially as the “prom.”

The paper thus joins the ranks of jaded Washingtonians who have known for years that the dinner—which features bad comedy and worse food—is the low-light of the weekend, a movable (within the Beltway) feast that grows each year, and now kicks off with Friday-night cocktail parties, followed by a Saturday brunch, dozens of pre-dinner cocktail parties, at least three competing Saturday night after-parties, and a Sunday brunch, along with countless other small events and dinners as out-of-town guests catch up with the D.C. folk.

Clearly, many Washington reporters relish the excuse to dress up and drink once a year (actually, many don’t need an excuse). Even if the dinner diminishes in importance, the opportunity it provides to hold subsidiary soirées ensures it will never be eliminated.

But why not? The Washington press corps could just dump the dinner, hold an annual cocktail party that triggers the ancillary festivities, and be done with it—the weenies, Rich Little, and all. —GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

DEPLOYING DICK

It’s a tough time for the brave men and women charged with coming up with *raison d’être* for Dick Cheney. Of late, his job has narrowed to serving as bad cop in our long-distance dialog with Iran. Even as Condi Rice was trying to persuade the mullahs of Tehran to help us leave Iraq (to them), Cheney was aboard one of two U.S. carriers in the Persian Gulf warning the same mullahs to behave, and vowing that the U.S. would continue to control the sea-lanes surrounding Iran for the foreseeable future.

Since it’s no small expense to deploy two carrier groups in the Gulf, however, here’s an idea: Keep one carrier group there, withdraw the second, and deploy Cheney in its stead. He looks buoyant enough, with sufficient hot-air content to simultaneously bob along and threaten Iran. This will also keep him far from American voters, for which Republican candidates will be deeply grateful.

Now, then: What to do with W.?

NO THERE THERE

Remember the line in Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* when the farmer notes the peculiarity of the crop-duster dusting where there aren’t any crops?

That’s nothing, it turns out, compared to nation building where there isn’t any nation. Consider, for instance, the

efforts of Iraqi legislators to equitably divide the nation’s oil. In legislation drafted by the Shia-dominated cabinet (legislation that’s been kicking around since February), fully 93 percent of Iraq’s oilfields are to be entrusted to the national oil company, controlled by the Shia government in Baghdad. The fields include a number in areas controlled by the Kurdish regional government, whose Web site prominently displays the words “WRONG” and “TOO BIG” by that 93 percent figure. Not surprisingly, the legislation still languishes in the legislature.

We ask you: Is this a country that needs U.S. forces or a good divorce lawyer?

OFFSHORING OFFSHORERS

For auto workers who have spent years seething at arrogant newspaper editorialists who celebrated the offshoring of factory jobs, help—no, make that revenge—may be on the way. The 2-year-old Web site pasadenanow.com—a mom-and-pop operation that covers some of the news that’s fit to print in Pasadena, California, home of the Rose Parade—has hired two low-dollar reporters based in India to cover its hometown. “They’re working now on profiles of Pasadena community leaders,” editor-publisher James Macpherson (no, not the great Civil War historian) told the *Prospect* when we reached him by phone.

ERIC PALMA

**THE QUESTION:
WHAT SHOULD
PAUL WOLFOWITZ'S
NEXT JOB BE?**

"After seeing what he did in Iraq and the World Bank, he should become head of the National Republican Congress."

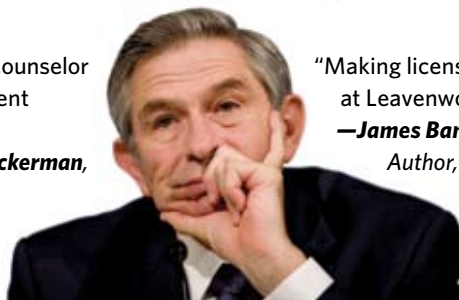
—**Eric Alterman**,
Columnist, *The Nation*

"Special Counselor to President Sarkozy."

—**Bruce Ackerman**,
Professor,
Yale Law School

"Making license plates at Leavenworth."

—**James Bamford**,
Author, *A Pretext for War*



What the stories may sacrifice in local color, political and social context, and kindred inessentials is plainly more than compensated for by the writers' wages: Each will earn \$10,400 a year, according to the Associated Press, for turning out roughly 15 stories a week. But this trade-off of local know-nothingism for low-overhead wouldn't be necessary for journalists working solely in the realm of ideas—that is, editorial writers. Since universal truths are universal, editorials can be written anywhere.

Keep that in mind, Rupert, when the *Journal* is yours.

CLASSY BALLPARKS

When *Prospect* Executive Editor Harold Meyerson was a lad, spending his youth in Dodger Stadium to observe the miracle of Sandy Koufax's pitching, tickets came in three categories—box seats, bleachers, and general admission. The Dodgers have never since had a player comparable to the great Koufax, but that hasn't kept ticket prices from rising—and differentiating, to drive prices even higher.

Where once there were only three price levels for tickets, today, according to a report in the *L.A. Times*, there are 83. There are dug-out boxes, third-base-side boxes—for all we know, Infield Fly Rule boxes—all to extract more revenue from

those able and willing to pay.

Since baseball teams play 162 games a year, tickets are still generally affordable, but stadiums, which once upon

a time were a fairly egalitarian place, are now as micro-targeted and class-stratified as everything else in our post-middle-class land.

Desegregating baseball racially, resegregating baseball economically: The Dodgers giveth; and the Dodgers taketh away. **TAP**

PARODY

Have You Politicized Your Federal Agency?

A quick self-diagnostic test

At the FDA, I have:

- A.** Approved drugs impartially and based on rigorous tests of safety.
- B.** Approved drugs only with testing, but drugs made by campaign contributors seem to move faster up through the pile.
- C.** Approved drugs that imbue Republicans with paranormal upper-body strength while leaving Democrats emaciated and, as a rule, infertile.

At the Department of Agriculture, I have:

- A.** Encouraged setting certain requirements for animal-waste management.
- B.** Trusted the market to find the optimal methods of animal-waste management.
- C.** Draped Harry Reid's house in excrement.

At the Department of Transportation, I have:

- A.** Approved new taxiways at airports that are expanding.
- B.** Approved a new taxiway at Dallas/Fort Worth airport but rejected one at Logan.
- C.** Arranged for political opponents to take controversial "death flights."

At the Department of Labor, I have:

- A.** Aggressively enforced existing labor laws regarding collective bargaining.
- B.** Reviewed complaints from labor organizers but dismissed most.
- C.** Outsourced labor law enforcement to Colombian paramilitaries.

At Treasury, I have:

- A.** Encouraged the IRS to enforce all aspects of the tax code.
- B.** Slow-walked enforcement of the estate and capital-gains taxes.
- C.** Arranged for the RNC to borrow Fort Knox for a much-praised fund-raising event.

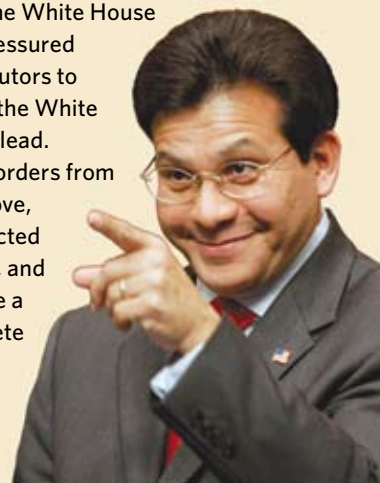
At the Department of Interior, I have:

- A.** Helped deliver irrigation to areas most in need.
- B.** Delivered irrigation that, according to analysts, favored Arizona over California.
- C.** Cut off all water to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

At the Department of Justice, I have:

- A.** Encouraged prosecutors to bring indictments as needed.
- B.** Regularly communicated policy priorities from the White House and pressured prosecutors to follow the White House lead.
- C.** Taken orders from Karl Rove, obstructed justice, and lied like a complete idiot.

— **T.A. FRANK**



Whose Big Government?

BY MARK SCHMITT

THE MOST CONFUSING POLITICAL PHENOMENON OF recent times is “big-government conservatism.” The lines on every graph show the same pattern: Government—whether measured by spending, the deficit, the number of employees, or earmarked appropriations—expanded

through the Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush Senior administrations; declined steadily under Clinton; then shot rapidly northward after Republicans took control of the White House in 2001.

For conservatives, the story of big-government conservatism has become a chapter in their own self-satisfied mythology. It is the story of moral corruption, of the dreams of libertarian paradise hijacked by the grasping Washington interest groups. “We were sent here to change Washington,” the conservatives say, “but Washington changed us.” They succumbed to the irresistible temptation to spend, but through confession and self-flagellation they will restore the conservative soul. This theology even has a name—“public-choice theory”—and a seminary at George Mason University.

The fact that the right would never have been able to hold and retain power had it actually shrunk entitlements or admitted its intent to privatize Social Security before the 2004 election is merely an inconvenient detail in an otherwise compelling fable. But for liberals, big-government conservatism creates a real paradox: It’s easy to say, “Gotcha!”—the right promised small government and delivered big bureaucracy instead—but what does it mean to say that? That *we* are the true small-government conservatives? That reducing the size of government is an end in itself? If liberals retake power, does it become our goal to shrink government?

In fact, big-government conservatism has nothing in common with the willingness to use public means for public good that characterizes liberalism. Big-government conservatives grew government because they needed it to blur the lines between public and private, in order to make government an instrument of private and political power.

Almost 50 years ago, in *The Affluent Society*, John Kenneth Galbraith described a society “out of balance,” in which private spending and private wants were not matched by public investment. But for Galbraith, the distinction was clear: Public is government; private is, well, private.

But what would Galbraith make of today’s student-loan system? Government enables private banks to make loans, structures the market, and guarantees profits. It is considered half-private, half-public. Yet it is horribly complex, rife with corruption, and \$6 billion a year that could help students afford college instead fattens the coffers of private lenders, enriching people like Albert Lord, the CEO of Sallie Mae. An entirely public system, in which government made loans directly to students, would be cheaper and less complex. That might be “bigger government,” but it would be

more efficient and would better serve the public purpose. Alternately, we could have a fully private system, in which banks actually compete and take risks, perhaps by bidding for the right to make loans.

Instead, we have the worst of both worlds: government that is bigger than it needs to be because it helps generate private profits. The same could be said of the Medicare Advantage program, which supposedly introduces “private-sector competition” to Medicare, but instead spends \$1,000 more per person than is necessary because it subsidizes private-sector profits.

Big-government conservatism is also about blurring lines for reasons of power. In recent hearings on the U.S. attorney firings, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse generated a chart showing the lines of interaction between the Bush White House and the Justice Department—a tortured web involving dozens of people. The same chart for the Clinton White House involved just three lines. Whitehouse’s chart sure looks like a big bureaucracy. But what it really says is that anyone in the Bush White House can call almost any Justice Department lawyer and ask about pending cases.

A complex bureaucracy should serve to tame and moderate power. But the Whitehouse chart, the student-loan system, the Medicare Advantage program, and their ilk do the opposite: They use complexity to concentrate private or political power, to hide power, or to exploit

public power for private gain.

The answer to big-government conservatism, then, is neither a promise to shrink government nor expand it, but a promise that public institutions will serve the public. The resulting government may claim a higher percentage of the gross domestic product, but it will feel smaller and more efficient—and can eventually restore the sense of balance between public and private that is absent today as it was in Galbraith’s time. **TAP**

*Conservatives
grew government
in order to
guarantee
private profits.*

American Jews and the Mideast

BY JO-ANN MORT

“SHALOM, CHAVER” (“GOOD-BYE, FRIEND”) WAS PRESIDENT Bill Clinton’s memorable refrain at slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin’s funeral. And few things have demonstrated so clearly the profound link between the Israeli people and America as the “Shalom, Chaver” bumper stick-

ers that showed up on Israeli cars after a right-wing Jew murdered the prime minister, in November 1995.

Twelve years later, the tatters of these bumper stickers can still be seen on the backs of autos, even as the Israeli nation drives aimlessly into the 40th year of a tragic occupation over the Palestinians. But the bumper stickers were more than an artifact of binational friendship; they were also a populist statement by a large number of Israelis that Bill Clinton understood them, and a thank-you to Clinton for trying to assist Rabin in bringing peace to the region.

Candidates running in the current presidential election would do well to remember the impact Clinton had on the Israeli public. They’d do equally well to recall the impact the Clinton presidency had on the American Jewish community, which fully embraced the agenda of the last Democratic chief executive, giving Clinton nearly 78 percent support in his 1996 reelection. Why was this so?

It wasn’t simply that Clinton spoke with authority and compassion about the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, which he did. It wasn’t simply that he personally tried to resolve the impasse, which he did. It wasn’t simply that he appeared genuine in his affection for Israel, which he did. It was also that he represented the very same liberal sensibility that American Jews have clung to ever since they became an important voting bloc. And that support for a liberal agenda among American Jews

has only strengthened since—precisely because George W. Bush has moved the domestic agenda so far toward the Christian right, embracing an ideology that is not only antithetical to the vast majority of American Jews but actually threatens their sense of freedom in this country.

And yet the playbooks of the current crop of presidential candidates, even one named Clinton, seem utterly uninformed by this history. The sole exception has been Bill Richardson, who mentioned that he would consider bringing former Secretary of State James Baker (the *bête noir* of more conservative-leaning Jews) back on board to get things moving in the Middle East. Perhaps Richardson—as a former negotiator himself, and with nowhere to go but up in the polls—was willing to take the gamble.

Thankfully, the candidates’ pandering has—so far, at least—been kept to a minimum. As of this writing, for instance, there’s been no mention of moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, to the empty plot of land in Israel’s capital, that perennial favorite of U.S. presidential candidates. But there also has been no forceful articulation of the present reality facing Israel.

The fact is that 40 years after the 1967

War, which did threaten Israel’s survival, Israel’s survival is threatened once again. The current threat doesn’t come from Hamas terrorism or even Iran; it comes from Israel’s failure to extricate itself from the occupied territories in a manner that will ensure its security and future as a Jewish and democratic state—a threat that surely harms U.S. interests in the region as well.

Former President Clinton has not been afraid to make this point to numerous American Jewish audiences, and the current crop of presidential candidates should follow suit. A robust and realistic revival of international engagement, completely missing from the current administration, would be welcomed by most American Jews—not just because of their concern for Israel but also in the interest of ending genocide in Darfur, alleviating poverty in Africa, and strengthening America’s standing in the world. Indeed, Israel’s ability to finally live in peace in its neighborhood depends on a more robust U.S. internationalism overall. If the next U.S. president can assist Israel in gaining acceptance by much of the Arab world, that

president will leave a legacy of a more secure Israel.

As in years past, the majority of American Jews will likely vote for the Democratic candidate—any Democratic candidate—more due to his or her embrace of a liberal domestic agenda than for any particular position on Israel. The fact is, those American Jews who are hard-liners on Israel simply don’t represent the majority of American Jews. Unfortunately, they do lead the chorus, and therefore drive the debate. But that

chorus is not infinitely expandable, and the loudest voices shouldn’t mislead the presidential candidates into staying silent on Israel’s real options for peace. **TAP**

Jo-Ann Mort is co-author of Our Hearts Invented a Place: Can Kibbutzim Survive in Today’s Israel?

*Attention,
Democratic
presidential
candidates:
Most American
Jews aren’t
hardliners
on Israel.*

A Conversation with Zbigniew Brzezinski

After the failure of adventures based on fantasies, it's time for a big dose of reality in America's Mideast policy. America's most notable foreign policy realist speaks with the Prospect.

THE PREMISE OF THIS SPECIAL COLLECTION OF ARTICLES on peace in the Middle East is that all the major elements of regional conflict and cooperation are linked. These include U.S. relations with Iran, options for U.S. exit from Iraq, U.S. containment of militant Islamism, economic development of the region, and a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In this interview, which frames the issue, *Prospect* co-editor Robert Kuttner discusses with former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski how the various elements of Middle East peace fit together.

Robert Kuttner: In your view, what are the prospects for some kind of big regional settlement in the Middle East? And how do the several pieces fit together?

Zbigniew Brzezinski: I think that a regional settlement is possible, provided the power that is most capable of promoting it engages itself seriously. This is not to say that it will be easy, but it is not impossible. The overwhelming element of uncertainty is whether the United States has the will and the gumption to tackle the issue.

RK: What is the relationship between some kind of tolerable stabilization of Iraq and a broader regional settlement of the other major outstanding issues, the two obvious ones being Israel-Palestine and Iran?

ZB: The Israeli-Palestinian issue is ripe for settlement, provided the United States pursues it, because neither of the two parties on the official level has the will and the predisposition to seek that settlement. By now we know what the fundamental parameters of a genuine settlement are, and if they're not implemented, there will be no settlement.

The Iraqi situation will take time to stabilize itself, but the longer the conflict lasts and the longer the occupation lasts, the more the civil war and the anti-U.S. insurgency are going to be intertwined. Therefore, it is important to cut the nexus and to set in motion a political process that facilitates United States disengagement and contributes to stabilization. It's hard to say how quickly it could be achieved, but within

two years there could be genuinely significant improvement.

Iran is going to be there forever, and Iran is going to be important in the region whether we like it or not. And it's in our interest, first of all, to avoid a collision, because an American-Iranian collision, either deliberately provoked or accidentally precipitated, would bog the United States down in a conflict that will then span both Iraq and Iran.

RK: Let's take them one at a time. If we want some kind of lessening of tensions with Iran, what's the sequence by which we bring that about?

ZB: Well, what seems a good way to begin—which is in fact what is happening right now, but the outcome of which is obviously uncertain—is the dialogue about regional security. This is presumably focused specifically on Iraq, but by implication it involves others. If we are prepared to be serious on this, I think that could in turn make it somewhat easier to perhaps eliminate the obstacle to more discussion about the nuclear problem—that obstacle being the U.S. decision, clumsy and basically stupid, to insist that the Iranians give something up as a precondition for a serious dialogue on the subject. I frankly don't understand how anyone in his right mind would make that condition if he were serious about negotiations, unless the objective is to prevent negotiations.

RK: Is the whole or partial normalization of relations with Iran and a lifting of sanctions the first step, or the last step?

ZB: I think the first step is the dialogue with Iran, with Syria, and the others, but particularly with Iran. That could lead to some understanding regarding the nuclear issue in which, for example, the Iranians voluntarily decide to suspend for a period of time enrichment, and we suspend some of the sanctions that we have imposed over the years or very recently. I don't have a particular menu for this process. But it seems to me it doesn't require the mind of a rocket scientist to figure that this is an approach that has worked in other cases. And we did, after all, after several painful years, manage to change our negotiating position toward North Korea. So why shouldn't we be able to do it also toward Iran?



RK: Well, in light of how the Korean shift came about—how Secretary Condi Rice and National Security Advisor Steve Hadley had to go directly to the president and cut Vice President Cheney out of the loop—do you see a shift in who's making policy and a shift in the ability of the real hard-liners to veto progress?

ZB: I think the real shift is that in the case of North Korea, we had a party to the talks who was tough-minded and clear as to what ought to be done. And they weren't particularly hesitant in communicating it cogently to us. I refer to the Chinese. And on the U.S. side, we're fortunate to have a negotiator, who, while compliant with the general ideological line of the administration, is tough-minded and independent. That's Chris Hill. He was able in a sense to foster a serious dialogue with the Chinese and within the administration at the same time. I don't see that yet in our relationship with Iran, but it is to these factors that I ascribe the change, and not so much to the notion that Rice and Hadley had an epiphany.

RK: Well, let's shift to Israel. You said the terms of the settlement are well known by now.

ZB: Yes, and if I may say so, I have been advocating them for years. And I think, not because of my advocacy, they now are more generally accepted, and the public-opinion polls show that the Israeli public and the Palestinian public will accept them. I suspect the majority of American Jews, who are predominantly liberal, would also accept them. They may not be acceptable to the Likudniks and the right wing in Israel politically. They may not be acceptable to Hamas or some key elements of it.

They may not be acceptable to AIPAC, which tends to be more catholic than the pope when it comes to Israel.

But the basic elements, in my judgment, are the following. One: no right of return. That's a very bitter pill for the Palestinians to swallow; I have to emphasize that. It's a fundamental issue for them. But there cannot be any right of return, unless they package it as 20,000 Palestine grandmothers over the age of 80 and certified not to be capable of child bearing, something like this.

Now second, in return for that, there has to be the sharing of Jerusalem. Let me just be as blunt on this as I can be, even though I know that this is an emotional issue. There will be no peace if Jerusalem is entirely controlled by Israel. Because you can see the Golden Dome from the West Bank, and it's a living symbol of what they all consider to be an unfair peace ... it has to be shared. The outline is roughly what Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak were talking about, and the Geneva Accords actually are the most specific description of how this could be done.

The third is a division based roughly on the 1967 borders, but not mechanically, because a number of settlements that are near the border and are largely urban should be incorporated into Israel, in return for which there should be an absolutely asymmetrical adjustment in favor of the Palestinian state. Otherwise, it's again perceived as an unfair treaty in a setting in which close to six million Israelis and roughly five million Palestinians have already divided the previous Palestine mandate, 78 percent in favor of Israel and ... 22 percent for Palestine. So you can't expect the Palestinians to accept any further cuts.

And the fourth element is the comprehensive demilitarization

One reaches a settlement not because one likes the people involved ... but because, in at least some circumstances, a settlement is better than a war. It's as simple as that.

of the Palestinian state, with a major UN presence. When I first advocated that, some critics called me crazy, and yet today we have a major presence of military personnel from NATO countries in southern Lebanon with Israel accepting it. And I think this crazy idea will probably be actually beneficial to Israel.

RK: This would include not just presence, but explicit security guarantees?

ZB: Yes, absolutely. I would even say that if Israel signs a peace treaty on that basis with the Palestinians, I would personally favor Israel's membership in NATO.

RK: Do you see an enhanced European role in the region as the American credibility has been diminished?

ZB: You know, I said that China plays an important role in the Korea negotiations. But the Europeans haven't played an important role in the Middle East, because there's no Europe; there's only European countries. And there won't be a European role until Europe—by which I mean primarily the political leadership of Great Britain, Germany, and France, maybe supported on the margins by Spain, Italy, and Poland—comes to us and says, "This is our European policy. We are your allies. We are willing to work with you, but policy is shared, and responsibilities are shared." That's in effect what the Chinese said to us. Such a Europe would be important, but we're not going to have such a Europe for some years to come.

RK: And that being the case, Europe won't be a major player?

ZB: Europe can be supportive, and the Europeans will certainly support us if we do what I think we should do. But they'll be frustrated and disappointed with us if we don't act, but unable to do it on their own. And then we'd have an even bigger mess.

RK: Before the American invasion of Iraq, there was a lot of talk about the road to Jerusalem leading through Baghdad: Destroy Saddam and you supposedly strengthen the prospects for peace on terms acceptable to Israel. Some people now argue that the road runs the other way—that an Israel-Palestine settlement would reduce tensions in the region because it would remove one of the principal frustrations in the Arab relationship—and, for that matter, the Iranian relationship—with the United States. On the other hand, has so much damage been done now by the Iraq War and the radicalization of Islam that even a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict would no longer be so helpful in bringing greater peace and stability to the region?

ZB: Prior to the war with Iraq, an Israel-Palestine settlement, with us playing a creative role in it, would have fundamentally altered Arab attitudes toward the United States. The United States has been viewed in the region somewhat benignly as a

kind of post-imperial presence, replacing the British and the French, in spite of its support for Israel. But in recent years, when we shifted from being a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, that positive image began to erode and provoke, among some, intense hostility toward America. Some of that would disappear if there was such a settlement.

Unfortunately, we have done other damaging things since then. We have destroyed the most viable and the most modern Arab country in the Middle East. We destroyed the Iraqi state, loathsome as its leadership was. Now, we are also destroying the country—24 million people, two million of whom have been driven out of the country, one and a half million of whom have been driven out of their homes, and roughly half a million of whom are not living today because of what happened. Not that all of them were killed by us, but some children were not born because of us. Other people died earlier because of us. There's been a general decline in fertility, and a general increase in mortality, because of what has happened. That has created a lot of resentment, obviously.

And then on top of it, there is the Islamophobic rhetoric that Bush has fostered, and the irresponsible plunge of the mass media and the entertainment industry into terror sensationalism with a strong racist, religious tone to it, resulting in a feeling of real resentment. Some of these manifestations really, to me, are reminiscent of the characterizations of Jews in Nazi Germany, the deliberate caricatures of entire groups of people in a conscious way. I am particularly shocked that some Jewish student organizations are now promoting that with films and so forth, as if they were not aware of the fact that the Holocaust was the product of similar hatred; and that is profoundly disturbing, politically and morally.

RK: But even with all of that, if the United States hopes to get back some of its moral influence in the world and region, an Israel-Palestine settlement would still help?

ZB: It would help a hell of a lot. And it would help a lot also toward solving the Iraqi problem, and then probably thereby facilitate some sort of a reasonable balance in relations with Iran. And all of that, cumulatively, would have a very profound impact. But it would no longer have the same close-to-total effect if we had done this when I think we could have done it.

And we could have done it twice. We could have done it with Bush Senior. If he had been reelected, it would have been done, but he wasn't reelected. And then it could have been done if Clinton had been more serious and less politically calculating and had applied himself to it, not just a few months before the elections but maybe a couple of years before the elections.

RK: Let's turn to Iraq. What is the least bad way out of Iraq, and what is the least bad scenario for what happens after we leave?

ZB: In a nutshell: a Kurdish/Shiite, somewhat theocratic regime that probably uses a combination of compromise and brutal violence, resolves the civil strife, is then nominally friendly toward us, but is not really a reliable friend. But at the same time, Iraqi nationalism is still somewhat of a barrier to Iran in the region.

RK: A less brutal version of Saddam?

ZB: You're putting it rather brutally yourself, but that's essentially right.

RK: And what do the Sunnis get?

ZB: The Sunnis get what they can get, and that depends on whether they prefer to accommodate or whether they want to fight. I don't feel that it is America's responsibility to resolve their civil war—although it is in a sense, unfortunately, a civil war that we have produced. So we cannot be totally passive, nor indifferent. Nonetheless, you don't solve civil wars by foreign occupation unless you can make that occupation totally successful. The fact of the matter is, we're not able; not physically, but we're not able as a matter of will to end that civil war by force of arms. That would require a combination of an enormous military effort with extraordinary brutality, and the country isn't prepared to support either.

RK: So does that mean—withdrawal by a date certain?

ZB: Well, as you may know, I've been advocating for well over a year now that we set a date, and I've been using the date of one year. That year has already passed, because my voice hasn't been heeded.

RK: But what happens? Let's assume we heed your voice, and on June 1st of 2008, the last American troop leaves, and civil war intensifies.

ZB: Well, if people know that we are leaving—first of all, it's not going to be a surprise. People have to adjust to that reality. And I would imagine some intelligent Shiite leaders would say, "Let's compromise." Others would say, "Let's fight." Probably both elements, both aspects will happen. And again, the dust settles.

RK: And do other regional countries play a role, and do we care what that role is?

ZB: Well, not really. I think the Syrians are going to get involved. The Syrians will be very anxious not to be left out of the peace arrangement between Palestine and Israel. The Iranians obviously will favor the Shiites, and there's a simplistic assumption among some here that the Iraqi Shiites are somehow or other willing sacrifices. The fact is, they fought very well against the Iranians in the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war.

RK: And what about the concern that Iraq would be a hotbed for radical Islamist terrorists?

ZB: I see no reason for that. The Kurds would still need American support in the part of the Iraq where they are influential. The Shiites would still need some balance between them-

selves and Iran, which would require support from us. After all, there are territorial disputes, which, of course, the Iraqis remember. And the Saudis would have some influence over the Sunnis. I think we could probably manage that. It's not going to be "a cake walk" by any means, but I think that scenario is still, despite its inherent uncertainties, probably preferable to the consequences of continued civil war with America mixed up in that civil war directly, and perhaps inching toward some unintended collision with Iran in the process.

RK: Can you articulate a principled basis for when to reach accommodation with hostile or even odious regimes? Iran is not Nazi Germany. But where do you draw the line in terms of people whom you can do business with and reach a settlement of some kind based on mutual interests versus people who are totally abhorrent?

ZB: One reaches a settlement not because one likes the people involved or because they're good people. But one reaches a settlement because, in at least some circumstances, a settlement is better than a war. It's as simple as that. Now if Iran wants a war with the United States, they will certainly get one. But I don't want America to want a war with Iran, because I think we're better off without a war with Iran. And it's no comfort to me that some Iranians may want to commit suicide. So I think one should always give settlement a chance, unless one is attacked.

RK: So you don't believe that the fact that some people in the Middle East do want to commit suicide makes it a challenge of a whole other order of magnitude?

ZB: Well, some people may, but that doesn't mean that states will. We'll have problems with groups and terrorists, but if states involved don't want to commit suicide, then they could become allies in containing these groups, provided there is some accommodation on outstanding issues.

RK: How do you see the United States regaining moral authority in the region and the world after these debacles under the Bush administration?

ZB: There's a very simple, very basic answer. The very simple answer is by surviving the next 20 months without an escalation of war. That automatically means the situation becomes different at the end of 2008.

RK: But then the hard work begins.

ZB: But then the hard work begins with the new president, who is not encumbered by the catastrophic judgments of his predecessor, nor with the fanaticism of his predecessor, not by underestimating the difficulties.

RK: Do you think the more fanatical, paranoid factions of the Bush administration have been weakened to the point where policy is already changing?

ZB: I think the composition of the group within the administration has been diluted. The big uncertainty is the disposition at the very top. **TAP**

To the Incoming President: On Iraq

It's January, 2009. A Democrat has just become president and confronts one mean conundrum: What's the best way to leave Iraq?

BY FLYNT LEVERETT

TO: The New President
FROM: The National Security Adviser
DATE: January 21, 2009

ON MAY 1, 2003, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH STOOD on the deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* under a banner reading “Mission Accomplished” and triumphantly proclaimed the beginning of a new era in America’s relations with the Middle East.

As Bush and his advisers worked to define this new era, they rejected the regional strategy launched by another American president on the deck of another U.S. warship: Effectively, Bush repudiated the “oil for security” bargain struck by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with Saudi Arabian King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud aboard the *USS Quincy* on February 14, 1945, as a 60-year mistake. Bush’s alternative strategy posited that a “free” Iraq, liberated by U.S. military power, would serve as a beacon in the heart of the Middle East for the development of liberal, and therefore pro-American, regimes throughout the region.

Today, almost six years after the invasion of Iraq, the failures of the Bush strategy are all too apparent, in Iraq and the region more generally. These failures dogged Republican presidential candidates throughout the election campaign, and they played a major role in putting you, a Democrat, in the White House. As your presidency begins, the biggest challenge facing you is figuring out how to strike a new bargain in the Middle East that will extricate the United States from its Iraq quagmire while simultaneously reshaping the region’s geopolitical balance along lines favorable to U.S. interests.

ORIGINAL SINS

The principal reason why Bush’s Iraq project failed was not tactical mistakes in prewar planning and postwar occupation but fundamental strategic flaws. Bush believed that our decades-long emphasis on stability, and our corresponding tolerance for authoritarian regimes in America’s Middle East policy, had incubated the jihadist threat embodied in al-Qaeda. The primary objective of his post-September 11 campaign, with the Iraq War as its signature initiative, was to remake the

region—both its interstate balance of power and its prevailing modes of governance.

But Osama bin Laden and the trust-fund terrorists of 9-11 did not attack the United States because of authoritarian repression in Saudi Arabia or their hatred of our way of life. Rather, they attacked—as Robert Pape has persuasively documented in his data-rich study *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*—in reaction to prolonged deployments of U.S. ground forces in Arab countries, deployments that (well before the invasion of Iraq) caused the United States to be seen as an occupier. America’s invasion and occupation of Iraq played right into bin Laden’s hands, making the terrorist threat worse than before. And coupled with Bush’s disdain for managing shifting geopolitical balances to create a stable strategic environment in the Middle East, the Iraq War has weakened America’s regional position in multiple ways.

With a Democrat now in the White House, it is important to recognize how frequently Democrats embraced the same strategic misconceptions as the Bush administration: that the United States can maintain a substantial military presence on the ground in the Middle East (as opposed to naval forces and “over the horizon” long-distance forces stationed outside the region) without paying political and security costs; that forging strategic partnerships with important Arab states does not really matter in the regional balance of power; and that the United States does not have to let balance-of-power considerations affect its dealings with problematic states like Iran and Syria. Remember that it was Bill Clinton’s administration that introduced “backlash states” (an early version of the “axis of evil”) into the vocabulary of American foreign policy; imposed economic sanctions on Iran; and, in 1998, first defined the aim of U.S. policy toward Iraq as “regime change.” Consider also the slow decline in U.S.–Egyptian and U.S.–Saudi relations during Clinton’s tenure.

In the post-9-11 period, Democratic foreign-policy “experts” in think tanks and the punditocracy overwhelmingly supported Bush’s facile assertion that the United States could uproot an authoritarian regime ruling over a complex, internally divided country in the heart of a strategically critical and volatile

region—and somehow, in the process, make that region “better” while also enhancing America’s strategic standing. America’s recovery from the Iraq debacle will require rejecting the platitudes of neoconservative fellow travelers who audaciously present themselves as part of the Democratic Party’s “national-security wing.” Recovery will require disciplined strategic reflection and calculation on your part, not only about Iraq but about the region as a whole.

HARD REALITIES

Many observers, here and abroad, expected that the Democratic victory in the 2006 congressional elections would prompt the Bush administration to change course in Iraq. Certainly, Democratic endorsement of the Iraq Study Group recommendations provided President Bush with political cover to substantially reconfigure the American role there.



Instead, Bush offered up the “surge,” augmenting the U.S. military presence in Iraq by almost 30,000 troops during the first half of 2007. The surge grew out of a dubious proposition: that the deployment of additional U.S. troops would improve the security situation just enough to buy sufficient time and “space” for Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni politicians to reach, within a few months, substantive compromises on the most intractable issues of post-Saddam Hussein politics that had been dividing their communities since 2003.

But the additional manpower that the White House was able to wring from the Pentagon was too small to make a sustained, positive impact on the ground. By the end of 2007, it was apparent that Iraq was continuing its slow slide into communal—especially Sunni-Shia—civil war. Under mounting congressional and public pressure to draw down the U.S. military presence, Bush ordered token withdrawals during 2008, citing as justification various flimsy statistical indicators of short-term “progress” in improving security in different parts of Iraq. But for all intents and purposes, he stayed the course through the end of his tenure.

Thus, you come to office with roughly 100,000 American soldiers still in harm’s way in Iraq, stuck in a worsening secu-

rity environment. Bush’s strategy was even more profoundly flawed—and leaves you even larger policy challenges—when it came to Iraqi political dynamics. The strategy rested on a pair of underlying assumptions about post-Hussein Iraq: that there was a truly national union to be forged in Baghdad on important economic and political issues, and that the United States could induce Iraq’s Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni communities to negotiate such a union in accordance with a set of benchmarks defined in Washington. These assumptions were inextricably bound up with the Bush administration’s faith-based advocacy of democratization for the region.

In fact, though, Iraq’s three major ethnic and sectarian groups have failed to reach compromises on important issues, not because they are unwilling but because they are *unable* to do so. Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni politicians cannot reconcile positions that are fundamentally irreconcilable, and no measure of U.S. exhortation or coercion will change that reality.

The dominant tendencies in Iraqi politics today are regionalist, not centralist. The Kurdish political establishment insisted on the creation of an autonomous Kurdistan region as part of the original post-Hussein constitution, and the Kurdistan regional government has begun to develop what is, in effect, a separate Kurdish oil industry. Among Iraq’s Shia, the most powerful political current today is not Muqtada al-Sadr’s centralist populism; it’s regionalism.

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), with the increasingly apparent backing of Iran, advocates formation of an autonomous “Shiastan” region out of nine southern provinces (which would contain some of Iraq’s most important hydrocarbon assets), while the Fadhila Party is pushing for a smaller, three-province region that local politicians in Basra believe they could dominate. Even among Iraqi Sunnis, long considered the most committed defenders of centralism, the reality of Kurdish and Shia regionalism—and the spreading perception that central and western provinces contain larger hydrocarbon reserves than previously estimated—is generating a rising interest in a potential Sunni federal region.

The American focus on national reconciliation clearly runs counter to these trends, which has negative consequences for the security and political situations. In particular, the emphasis on capacity building for the central government has provided a widely accepted rationale for American efforts to bolster “national” security forces in Iraq—efforts that the Iraq Study Group and most prominent Democrats agreed should be a priority mission for U.S. military personnel. But the unpleasant truth is that the United States is not creating national-security forces in Iraq. To this day, U.S. security-assistance programs train primarily single-sect units: Iraqi military units are almost exclusively Shia or Kurdish in composition, and this problem of sectarian identities within individual units is even more pronounced in security forces attached to the Iraqi interior ministry.

The results have been utterly predictable. In an ongoing communal civil war, trying to create a national-security apparatus while giving certain communities privileged standing in that apparatus is not simply going to fail; that kind of disguised sectarianism will only make the security situation dramatically

worse—pouring gasoline on the already raging fire of communal violence. Iraqization is the functional equivalent of empowering Bosnian Muslim forces to provide “security” in the Serb areas of Bosnia a decade ago. The only plausible way to stand up indigenous security forces in Iraq is on a regional—and openly sectarian—basis.

In the face of these increasingly assertive realities, the Bush administration, to the end of its tenure, pursued an approach to political reconstitution in Iraq based on the illusion of national reconciliation. Over the course of 2007, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s “national unity” government was increasingly stressed by the departure of Sadrist Shia and Sunni parliamentarians from the ruling coalition. During 2008, Maliki barely managed to hold his position through a series of parliamentary and political crises, but neither he nor the centralist model will likely survive parliamentary elections to be held later this year. The most probable outcome of those elections will be a governing coalition of Islamist Shia—dominated by SCIRI—and the main Kurdish bloc. This coalition will be strongly committed to the creation of a southern Shiastan region, maximizing the autonomy of regional governments vis-à-vis Baghdad and developing Iraq’s oil and gas industry along regional rather than national lines.

OPTIONS AND TRADE-OFFS

Given these prospects, a revised American policy in Iraq should aim to leverage the transition from centralism to regionalism to bring about a new regional bargain in the Middle East. This obviously requires a different approach to political reconstitution in Iraq. It also requires strategically grounded diplomacy to draw other actors into closer cooperation with the United States, since striking the intra- and cross-communal deals that would enable such a settlement within Iraq necessitates the application of positive and negative leverage by influential regional states, including Iran, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and others.

Pursuing a different approach to post-Hussein political reconstitution and engaging in more robust regional diplomacy will, of necessity, be linked to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. You have committed yourself (and you are under enormous domestic pressure) to begin a drawdown almost immediately. Military withdrawal is also indispensable to repairing America’s strategic position in the Middle East—which requires, among other things, a return to an over-the-horizon military posture, with naval forces providing a constant presence and equipment pre-positioned in the region to support the deployment of ground forces in the event of a crisis.

As you work to recast the American posture in Iraq, what options are available? In broad terms, the Democratic campaign for the 2008 election highlighted three discrete alternatives.

PHASED REDEPLOYMENT. One option is, in essence, the course sketched out in the Iraq Study Group report: a phased redeployment that removes U.S. combat forces from Iraq while leaving a residual force to train Iraqi security forces and strike at al-Qaeda elements as they are detected. As noted, Democrats

generally supported the study-group recommendations, and several Democratic presidential candidates, including Senators Hillary Clinton, Chris Dodd, and Barack Obama offered versions of “phased redeployment.”

While this option appears measured and minimizes exposure to Republican charges of cutting and running, it is simply not in sync with the regionalist realities of Iraqi politics. In theory, phased redeployment could be linked to either a centralist or regionalist model; in practice, the versions presented by Democratic presidential candidates all prolong U.S. attachment to centralist illusions—in particular, by committing a residual U.S. force to support further “Iraqization” of security forces (though that will only increase the number of people killed in ethnic and sectarian violence).

Moreover, drawing down the American presence in Iraq might reduce the incidence of U.S. casualties, but any residual forces there will continue to be unwitting recruiters for the jihadist cause. The idea that residual ground forces are needed to strike al-Qaeda is misguided. Conventional forces are unsuited to quick-response missions against unconventional threats. The military has typically not relied on such forces to strike important terrorist targets in Iraq or Afghanistan; when ground units have succeeded in killing or capturing high-profile al-Qaeda figures, they have done so in firefights with terrorists who have effectively been acting as conventional forces. The most effective military options against terrorist leaders are tactical aircraft and “standoff” systems such as cruise missiles, which can be deployed from ships, and special forces, which can be deployed either from the sea or from bases in non-Arab countries such as Turkey, where the U.S. military presence is less likely to engender local terrorist activity.

WITHDRAW AND CONTAIN. A second option is to withdraw U.S. military units from Iraq as quickly as is logistically and tactically prudent, then redeploy some ground forces to nearby bases—most likely in Kuwait—to contain regional “spillover” from heightened communal violence inside Iraq. This is, in essence, the strategy advocated by former Senator John Edwards during his presidential campaign.

While this option has the virtue of ending the morally offensive sacrifice of American military personnel in the pursuit of unachievable ends, it has two serious deficiencies. First, unless one is concerned about the projection of conventional military power from Iraq—hardly a probable scenario—placing U.S. ground forces in Kuwait or elsewhere in the neighborhood is not likely to contain very much. Second, the experience of stationing a sizable contingent of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia—from Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003—refutes the notion that moving U.S. soldiers from Iraq to Kuwait would mitigate local perceptions of the United States as an occupying power. Redeployed American soldiers would continue to serve as catalysts for anti-Americanism and recruitment of jihadist cadres.

SOFT PARTITION. A third option is soft partition: Accept the post-Hussein realities and shift to a regionalist approach,

with each of Iraq's three major communities assuming a demographically and politically dominant role in one of three relatively autonomous regions—Kurds in the north, Shia in the south and east, and Sunnis in the west—and with Baghdad designated as a federal zone. During the presidential campaign, the most ardent advocate of soft partition was Senator Joseph Biden, who has argued since 2006 that the goal of national reconciliation in Iraq is unattainable. Under Biden's plan, the transition to a decentralized Iraq would be coordinated with a withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country and would entail robust diplomatic efforts by the United States with Iraq's neighbors and other players, including convening an international conference and creating a contact group to oversee implementation of soft partition.

Biden is correct that a decentralized state with strongly autonomous regions is the only sustainable long-term political outcome in Iraq, and that getting there will require other states in the region to apply positive and negative leverage. But this option has two significant deficiencies, one strategic and the other tactical, that need filling in before it can work.

At a strategic level, soft partition as presented by Biden does not in itself offer a springboard for the robust regional diplomacy required to achieve a decentralized and stable Iraq. In blunt terms, what is the incentive for Iran, Syria, or Saudi Arabia to spend money, political capital, and other resources to broker an Iraqi settlement that the United States could endorse? Biden argues that Iran and other regional states will cooperate because instability in Iraq threatens their interests. But these states are already positioning themselves to defend their interests in Iraq unilaterally, as the United States flounders. Biden believes that, in the end, regional actors will *need* to bail the United States out in Iraq, but this is faith-based foreign policy on a Bush-like scale. At this stage, Middle Eastern states will cooperate with a U.S.-defined agenda for stabilizing Iraq only if their cooperation is part of a broader grand bargain. In other words, the United States will have to give them other reasons to cooperate.

Intensifying regional cooperation on Iraq will require the United States, before convening an international conference on Iraq or establishing a contact group, to open broad-based strategic dialogues with relevant regional players, including Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

With Iran, the United States should convey its interest in comprehensive rapprochement, through which Tehran would not only cooperate in Iraq but also accept meaningful restraints on its nuclear activities and abandon its support for the terrorist activities of Hamas and Hezbollah. In return, the United

Military withdrawal is also indispensable to repairing America's strategic position in the Middle East—which requires, among other things, a return to an over-the-horizon military posture.

States would commit itself not to use force to change Iran's borders or form of government. It would pledge to lift unilateral sanctions and normalize bilateral relations, and to acknowledge a legitimate regional role for Iran.

For Damascus, Washington will need to lay out a "road map" for rebuilding U.S.–Syrian relations, based on reciprocal U.S. and Syrian commitments on economic, political, and strategic issues.

And for Saudi Arabia, the United States will need to be prepared for a serious conversation about modifying U.S. policies on Persian Gulf security and Arab-Israeli peacemaking to recognize Saudi interests and initiatives.

At a tactical level, implementing the soft partition while avoiding significant ethnic and communal violence will be both a military and political challenge. The only potentially feasible solution is to deploy a multinational force—authorized by the United Nations Security Council, organized by either the Arab League or the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and backed by U.S. logistics and transport capabilities—to patrol regional borders inside Iraq, secure transit corridors between regions, and provide a security umbrella in Baghdad. An international conference on stabilizing Iraq would need to define this force's composition and mandate, while working to secure an accord

among Iraqi political leaders on the details of soft partition.

Embarking on such an ambitious diplomatic agenda would be daunting under any circumstances. However, to have a viable recovery strategy in Iraq, you must launch this multipronged campaign urgently. Given the clear imperative to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, you must elicit cooperation on a regional deal for soft partition—before you have gone so far down the road of a military withdrawal that America's relevance to Iraq's future becomes questionable.

By taking these steps, the United States would not only extricate itself from Iraq; it would also forge a new strategic compact for the Middle East. In 1945, President Roosevelt wisely understood the imperative for such a compact. Though not perfect, his oil-for-security bargain assured the free flow of oil that has fueled six decades of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity around the world; extended as a "peace for security" bargain to Egypt in the 1970s, this framework also safeguarded Israel's survival. President Bush rashly devalued and largely discarded his predecessors' approach. Only a new and broader bargain between the United States and key Middle Eastern states can now bring security and stability to the most strategically critical region in the world. **TAP**

Flynt Leverett is a senior fellow and the director of the geopolitics-of-energy initiative at the New America Foundation. He is also a visiting professor of political science at MIT.

And the Land Was Troubled for 40 Years

Even as the Six Day War ended, Israeli leaders said privately that the occupation of Palestine was colonial, racist, illegal, and dangerous. They were right. And still it persists.

BY GERSHOM GORENBERG

THE HILLSIDE BELOW US IS A TERRACED VINEYARD, or was until the bulldozers came. There's a sharp smell of sage and recent rain, and the steady grind of heavy machinery. It is a cold day; a Palestinian man with a black stocking cap pulled over his headscarf stands in the stiff breeze, his face blank, watching as the two big shovels push aside greenery and the stone walls that support the terraces and leave a wound of red clay.

Behind us stand the white stone-faced houses of suburban Efrat alongside the shopping centers and real-estate signs announcing new developments in what is known as the Etzion Bloc, the largest Israeli settlement in the area, between Bethlehem and Hebron in the West Bank. In front of us, on the other side of a valley, are the minaret and low square houses of Umm Salamuna, a Palestinian village. The red gash in the ancient terraces is the route of the security barrier Israel is cutting through the West Bank. When completed, it will be a highway-wide swath of coiled concertina wire and patrol roads and sensor-rigged fencing.

The barrier will make it far more difficult for Palestinians, including both terrorists and day laborers, to enter Israel and the Etzion settlements. De facto, it will declare the annexation of the Etzion area. It will force Palestinians who live east of the barrier route, outside the Etzion area, to pass through Israeli gates to get to fields on the west—if on any given day the gates are open. Some 20,000 Palestinians who live in villages within the Etzion area will find themselves inside an enclave, barred from entering Israel proper and only able to reach schools, jobs, or hospitals in Bethlehem, the nearest Palestinian city, through one Israeli-controlled gate. By building the barrier around the Etzion Bloc, rather than putting the fence on the Israel–West Bank border, the government has declared that the settlers' daily safety overrides any possibility of normal life for the area's Palestinians.

"This astonishing landscape that we always saw and thought of as the 'Land of Israel'—the vineyards and the olive orchards—will be replaced by the fence," says Dror Etkes, head of Peace Now's Settlement Watch, who brought me here. Etkes' voice is a mix of melancholy and sarcasm. He is mourning for the countryside, and he is mocking those who have settled the West Bank so that the entire biblical Land of Israel stays under Jewish rule

even as they dress the land in asphalt and concertina. And I think he is weary from the work of trying to make Israelis notice the occupation—unless I am only hearing my own weariness in his voice. The occupation has become a malaise, a chronic, degenerative disease. It is not news, but it is destroying us.

Forty years have passed since Israel conquered the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula, in the suddenness of the Six Day War, in June 1967. Forty years is itself a biblical period of time. "And the land had peace for 40 years," the Book of Judges repeats after various warrior-chieftains defeat the Israelites' enemies. But this time, the land has not had peace. And after 40 years, the number of people with adult memories of the time before occupation is dwindling. Only about an eighth of today's Israelis have reached the age of 60. The Palestinian population is even younger. This is the way life has always been, except that it gets steadily worse.

On June 11, 1967, the morning after the Six Day War ended, the U.S. consul-general in Jerusalem, Evan Wilson, sent a cable home describing how Israeli workmen were using heavy equipment to remove fortifications that divided the city. It was a time of vanishing boundaries, of expanded space. The "Green Line," the prewar armistice demarcation that had served as Israel's border, no longer constrained movement. Israelis could visit the West Bank. Palestinians were soon allowed to enter Israel. Some came to look at homes they'd lost in 1948. More came to work, taking the lowest-paying manual labor, on farms and construction sites.

Today, space is contracting. Israelis can still visit the West Bank, though the major towns, under Palestinian Authority rule, are off-limits. A park near my house in Jerusalem straddles the old, erased line through the city; but from the park I can see, stretched on distant hills, a high concrete wall—the form used for the new security barrier in urban areas. The wall encircles Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. Except for settlers, most Israelis only occasionally catch a glance of the barrier route, or the army checkpoints and roadblocks that make it ever harder for Palestinians to travel. For Palestinians, the occupation is omnipresent; for Israelis, it is distant—and yet it defines and defiles our politics, our security, our international standing, our economy. It is elsewhere and everywhere, and our future depends on finding a way to end it.



Forty Years Ago—and Counting: An Israeli border guard proclaims a curfew in East Jerusalem to take a census of the Arab population, June 1967.

IT BEGAN WITH AN UNEXPECTED CONFLAGRATION. IN MARCH 1967, at a briefing for top Israeli commanders, the head of military intelligence said there would be no war in the Middle East for at least eight years. The Arabs aspired to destroy Israel—so went evaluations at the time—but were unready to fight. Israel had no reason to initiate a conflict.

True, there were parties on both the Israeli left and right whose platforms included laying claim to land beyond the border as Jewish patrimony. But the social-democratic ruling party, Mapai, was not among them; its program called for peace based on the “territorial integrity of all states in the region.”

Yet in May, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser marched his army into the Sinai Peninsula. Within three weeks, Israel faced a coalition of its neighbors promising its destruction. On June 5, Israel launched its preemptive attack. A week later, the Arab armies were shattered, and Israel had overrun territory three times its own size. The war was an act of self-defense, but the conquests exceeded any prewar planning, and there was no strategy for what was to be done with the newly occupied land.

The largest chunk was the Sinai Peninsula, but the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were most responsible for the postwar political paralysis. They belonged to what Jews regarded as their historical homeland. They were also part of what had been British-ruled Palestine, in which Israel’s leaders had come of age before

independence. It was the landscape of their revolutionary youth.

An Israeli-born friend of mine, a child in 1967, remembers her mother taking her on day trips to the West Bank that summer, Bible in hand, reading out verses about the places they visited. This was not a religious act; the Bible was national history. My friend’s father was a Knesset member representing a party that believed in socialism, secularism, and the Jewish claim to the whole Land of Israel. It regarded the conquered land as liberated.

Yet the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were also home to at least 1.1 million Palestinian Arabs. Israel’s founding father, David Ben-Gurion, had rejected conquering the West Bank in 1949 in order to ensure that the new Jewish state would actually have a Jewish majority. In the summer and fall of 1967, then-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was fond of saying that in the war, “We got a lovely dowry. The trouble is that with the dowry comes the wife.” The impossibility of keeping the dowry without the wife—the Palestinians—has framed Israeli politics ever since.

BESIDES HISTORY, SECURITY WAS THE MAIN REASON THAT TOP Israeli officials cited for retaining conquered land. Many regarded the West Bank as strategic depth, a new layer of defense. The Jordan River, though neither deep nor wide, would serve well as “an anti-tank canal,” in the view of Yigal Allon, a cabinet minister and ex-general. But virtually from the day after the war, there were warnings of the danger of staying put. I have dug through the documents of that time. We are living in a tragedy foretold.

At the first cabinet debate on the future of the occupied territories, shortly after the war, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan proposed giving the West Bank limited autonomy under Israel rule. Justice Minister Yaakov Shimshon Shapira attacked that idea. “In a time of decolonization in the whole world,” he said, “can we consider an area in which mainly Arabs live, and we control defense and foreign policy?” (The following month, two top foreign-ministry officials—Shlomo Hillel and Mordechai Gazit—wrote a policy memo urging a rapid diplomatic solution for Gaza and the West Bank, because “internationally, the impression could be created ... that Israel is maintaining a colonial regime.”) Shapira also warned against annexing the land outright. That, he said, would turn Israel into a binational state, in which Jews would eventually become the minority. Unless Israel gave up nearly all of the West Bank, Shapira said, “We’re done with the Zionist enterprise.”

Shapira also may have been the first to warn that settling Israeli civilians in occupied land would violate international law. Apparently unhappy with his justice minister’s view, Eshkol asked Theodor Meron, the legal counsel of the foreign ministry. Meron responded, “Civilian settlement in the administered territories contravenes the explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.” Nonetheless, Eshkol approved the first settlement in the West Bank, in the Etzion area, on the site of a kibbutz that had fallen in 1948. Sentimental attachment to a place where Jews had lived overcame legal constraints, and the way was opened to further settlement.

Even so, there were doubts and debate about how much land to keep. Eshkol himself, renowned for indecision, told Dayan

We cannot return to building the Israel we once sought while maintaining an empire; we cannot even argue about what that nation should be while the occupation continues.

and Allon, in May 1968, “There have been imperialist countries larger than us, and they taught [the colonial subjects] their languages and created Francophones and Anglophones ... Then the people knew to say, ‘Enough, we don’t want you here.’” Allon had his own qualms. Originally, he had wanted to keep the unpopulated parts of the West Bank and give autonomy to the populated areas; by 1968, he favored returning the populated parts to Jordanian rule. He realized, as he later explained, that a Palestinian enclave under Israeli rule “would be identified as ... some kind of South African Bantustan.”

One of the sharpest critics of the occupation was Pinhas Sapir, who served as finance minister under Eshkol and his successor, Golda Meir. In 1972, the Labor Party—an expanded version of Mapai—held a debate on the future of the occupied territories. Sapir railed at the “moral danger” of Israel’s dependence on Palestinian labor, which was creating “a class that does the clean work and those who do the dirty work”—akin “to negroes in the United States.” Continuing to rule over Arabs without granting them equal rights, Sapir said, would put Israel in a class with “countries whose names I don’t even want to say in the same breath.”

The occupation was colonial, and would produce rebellion. Exploitation of Palestinian labor was racist. Settlement would be illegal. Palestinian autonomy would resemble a Bantustan, a creation of grand apartheid. Israel would become an international pariah. These were not the arguments of distant campus radicals enamored of their megaphones; they were the all-too-accurate premonitions of Israeli patriots.

THE WARNINGS WENT UNHEEDED. ISRAELI-ARAB NEGOTIATIONS have repeatedly reached dead ends. Both sides share blame for the stalemate, but stalemate allowed the occupation to turn from accident to institution. Gradually, settlement in the occupied territories became Israel’s national project.

Dayan, the defense minister until 1974, aimed at permanent, paternalistic Israeli rule. In one cabinet debate in 1968, Dayan described German colonial rule of Togo, in West Africa, as a model for benevolent occupation. Economically, he promoted “integration” of the occupied territories with Israel. In practice, that meant that Palestinians became Israel’s laborers and a captive market for its products. Dayan “wanted Israelis to have such strong interests in the economic ties to the territories that no one would want to give them up,” explains political sociologist Lev Grinberg of Ben-Gurion University.

When the right-wing Likud took power in 1977, it accelerated the settlement drive. If Labor had been divided against itself on the future of the territories, the Likud was cocksure: While it gave up the Sinai Peninsula, it intended to keep the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights forever. Settlements would divide the territory and make Palestinian independence impossible. Cheap homes, tax breaks, and a host of other sub-

sidies drew Israelis to new suburbs. Those who believed in the Whole Land of Israel saw themselves as pioneers; those who didn’t talked housing prices and bedroom size. Settlers lived under Israeli law, as if the land had been annexed. Palestinians, disenfranchised, lived under military rule.

Politics was transformed. In 1967, “The agenda changed from building a nation to maintaining an empire,” says Shlomo Swirski, academic director of the Adva Center, a Tel Aviv social-policy institute. Before the war, Swirski says, government goals included providing jobs and housing for the Jewish refugees who had flooded Israel in its early years. Those projects had not been completed, but they were pushed aside. “Right” and “left” had previously referred to positions on economics; now they stood for views on settlement, Palestinians, and whether to keep all of the land or give up some for peace.

To this day, every other issue has been postponed—indeinitely, eternally. Schools deteriorate; national health care covers steadily less; tax cuts for the wealthy barely merit debate. In its first years, Israel was a social democracy; now it is ruled by Friedmanism. Yet a party that campaigns on economics declares itself marginal. What matters is territory and security. In the meantime, social gangrene sets in.

Before 1967, nation building also meant turning a movement into a state, establishing the rule of law and civil liberties. The occupation reversed that process. From the start of the settlement effort, the cause has trumped the law. In the summer of 1967, Allon funneled government funds for the unemployed to the first settlers in the Golan Heights. Aid from officials to lawbreakers has continued ever since.

A government-appointed attorney, Talia Sasson, reported two years ago on how state agencies had helped build the “outposts”—small settlements established over the last decade in defiance of Israeli law. Some, she said, stood on private Palestinian property, in “intolerable injury of Palestinians’ right of possession.” She called for their immediate evacuation. Nothing has happened. In the meantime, Etkes and another Peace Now staffer have used official land records for all settlements—not just the outposts—to show that one-third of their land is owned by Palestinians. This is theft, and a state-sponsored attack on the state’s own laws.

TWENTY YEARS AGO—AT THE HALFWAY POINT BETWEEN THE conquest and the present—the first Palestinian uprising erupted. The uprising convinced many Israelis that “integration” was a failure, because it allowed people who might kill them to enter their country freely, and also that it would be necessary to treat the Palestinians as a nation, not as scenery or a cheap workforce. In the early 1990s, Israel began requiring permits of Palestinians entering Israel, and the first checkpoints appeared on West Bank roads. In 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed the Oslo Accords, which gave Palestinians autonomy in

pieces of the West Bank, seemingly on the way to independence.

Instead, the occupation tightened, like a hand convulsing around a wire in response to an electric shock. Autonomy applied only to fragmented areas between the settlements, which kept growing. In 1993, there were 116,000 settlers in Gaza and the West Bank; in 2000—when the Oslo peace process collapsed and the second, more brutal uprising erupted—there were 198,000.

Today the number has risen to about 270,000 in the West Bank—an official Israeli figure that does not include another 180,000 in annexed East Jerusalem. The estimated Palestinian population of the same area is 2.5 million. “Land Grab,” a 2002

on the military. Last summer, after the war in Lebanon, veteran military commentator Ze’ev Schiff of the daily *Ha’aretz* wrote that the Israeli army’s “fighting abilities ... have been blunted by years of police action in the territories.” Manning roadblocks and arresting terrorism suspects left soldiers unprepared to face a real enemy, he wrote. Schiff is known for his high-ranking sources; those words, it seems, can be read as his sources’ unattributable complaint.

Add the diplomatic price. “The *only* problem we have in our international standing is the occupation and the settlements,” says Avi Primor, head of the Center for European Studies at the

Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya and a former Israeli ambassador to the European Union. He gives a striking example: After the Oslo Accords, the EU promised to give Israel “privileged status,” under which it would receive all the benefits of membership except voting rights. It was an unprecedented offer, and would have had major economic benefits. The move was frozen following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, revived when Ehud Barak seemed poised to make peace, and frozen again after the failure at Camp David. In talks with the Europeans, explains Primor: “They say to you, ‘What Israel are we talking about, ... what are its borders, who are its residents, where are its human rights?’”

Those are also Israel’s internal questions. After all the other costs are listed, the final price is to the country’s own character. The old warnings have proven true: We cannot return to building the nation we once sought while maintaining an empire; we cannot even find the presence of mind to argue about what that nation should be while the occupation continues.

In the United States, as Primor notes, support for Israel remains strong. But real concern for Israel does not mean blessing the status quo. America will be supporting Israel when it reengages in peace efforts, and any politician who claims pro-Israel credentials should be held to that test.

Ending the occupation depends on reaching peace, which depends as much on the Palestinians as on the Israelis. It would be easy to catalog the Palestinian violence and diplomatic bungling that have stood in the way of an accord.

That said, the Palestinians are not the only ones who have stood in the way of an accord. Israelis should see the end of the occupation as a cure, not a concession. Standing on the hillside at Efrat, watching the bulldozers tear the land, I am looking at a symptom of the disease. The land has been troubled for 40 years. That is already far too long. **TAP**

Gershon Gorenberg, a Prospect senior correspondent, is the author of *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977*.



Uneven Development: A Palestinian plows a field abutting the Israeli West Bank settlement of Efrat.

study by Yehezkel Lein of the B’Tselem human-rights center, showed that settlements controlled 42 percent of all West Bank land. These numbers understate the story, because of how the settlements divide the territory. The regime of roadblocks imposed since 2000 is designed to keep terrorists from entering Israel, but also to protect settlers; the security barrier is similarly dual-purpose. For Palestinians, traveling from part of the West Bank to another is “difficult or impossible,” as Lein told me recently.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops exited the Gaza Strip two summers ago, evacuating settlers as they left. But Israel still controls all access to the area in what could be called “indirect occupation.” “Without access to the outside, [Gaza] is essentially a prison,” says Menachem Klein of Bar-Ilan University, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

No one knows the full economic costs of the settlements and the occupation to Israel, though they are immense. Government outlays are scattered throughout the budget, including the defense budget, whose details are classified.

There has been a military price as well. Without a firm peace, holding the West Bank may be the best way to prevent attacks on Israel proper. But holding the land is also a constant drain

Ten Commandments for Mideast Peace

Three former peace negotiators for Israel, the U.S., and Palestine lay out a common plan that could provide the basis for an Israeli-Palestinian final settlement. All that's required is some political courage and leadership.

BY DANIEL LEVY, ROBERT MALLEY, AND GHAITH AL-OMARI

IT HAS BARELY BEEN NOTICED, BUT THERE HAS BEEN A change for the better in the Bush administration's thinking—or at least talking—about the Middle East. For the first time in six years, Washington is putting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations near the top of its agenda. For the first time, it wants those negotiations to address the fundamental political issues that divide the two sides and has begun to evoke the need to lay out what the administration calls a political horizon. And for the first time, it seems willing to take a risk. There was even a whiff of Bill Clinton in this most un-Clintonesque of administrations when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice suggested that dealing with provisional issues would be just as difficult as dealing with permanent ones, and hardly as rewarding.

This news is long in the waiting, but it's good news nonetheless. Movement on the peace process is important on its own merits, but—more important from a U.S. perspective—there are critical benefits to America's national security as well. The United States faces greater challenges today from the Middle East than perhaps at any other time in its history, yet it purposefully deprives itself of a major asset in that struggle when it walks away from Arab-Israeli diplomacy. A fair and energetic U.S. role would help restore America's battered credibility abroad, bolster pragmatic forces throughout the region, deprive violent groups of an easy recruiting tool, and help achieve broader objectives in the Middle East. Not everything in the region would be cured as a result of a credible Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but virtually nothing can be cured without it.

During the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the three of us worked on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for our respective peace teams—Israeli, American, and Palestinian. Much has changed since those days, little of it for the better. Still, many lessons remain—from the failures no less than from successes—of that previous experience. Whether the Bush administration carries through on its self-proclaimed objectives (and there is some reason to doubt it will) or whether the task of reinvigorating peace efforts falls to the next president, we herewith offer 10 recommendations regarding what the United States ought to do—and what it ought to avoid.

1 IT'S THE ENDGAME, STUPID.

The time for interim agreements—agreements that, as in the 1990s, defined incremental steps both parties should take—is long past. Because they satisfy neither side's essential needs, and because both sides know that the final compromises still await, partial agreements tend to diminish what they seek to augment, if what they seek to augment is mutual confidence. The temptation—always present, seldom resisted—is to create new facts on the ground that are prejudicial to a permanent-status deal. Though it won't be easy, America's primary focus should be on resolving the conflict through a comprehensive settlement.

When the Oslo Accords were signed, Israelis and Palestinians imagined it would take five years of gradual steps before they could resolve all outstanding issues. At last count, they were marking the seventh anniversary of that long-missed deadline. The delay is frustrating, perpetuates hardship, adds to obstacles on the ground, and fuels regional tensions. Yet it does even more than that: Over time, it is killing faith among both peoples in the possibility of a viable two-state solution. The loss of hope, in turn, risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Israelis and the Palestinians, given their weak leaderships, are unlikely to reach an agreement on their own. That means that the United States must put forward, at the right time, more specific ideas on a permanent settlement, describing the desired trade-offs and possible compromises. This should not be rushed, should not be proposed without sufficient international support, and should not be done out of desperation that all else has failed. But a permanent settlement should remain the objective, and all other actions should be subordinated to this aim. Insofar as success may take time, specific U.S. parameters in the interim would make the possibility of a two-state solution more palpable and real, and could help transform domestic dynamics in both Israel and Palestine. It could also help restore faith in the United States—no mean or trivial feat given how low its reputation has fallen.

2 GET THE CONTENT RIGHT.

If the United States is to play a positive role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it needs to be perceived as fair by all sides. That is not necessarily a matter of “neutrality” or of “even-



This was all the more unfortunate because, since Camp David, the broad outlines of a settlement have been demystified, whether in the Clinton parameters of December 2000 or in the more detailed Geneva Initiative. The outlines of an agreement are now basically known, and polls among both Israelis and Palestinians consistently show that these outlines enjoy majority support from both peoples: two states, based on the lines of June 4, 1967, with minor, reciprocal, and negotiated modifications; Jerusalem as the home to two capitals, divided along demographic lines; control by each side of its respective holy places, with unimpeded access to each community's sites; a solution to the refugee problem that addresses the importance and legitimacy-conferring role of the exact language used, but whose practical implication will be that refugees can return to the territory of the Palestinian state, not Israel, while providing meaningful financial compensation and resettlement assistance; and security mechanisms that can address Israeli concerns, while respecting Palestinian sovereignty.

handedness"; too many American politicians have suffered for too long from the mere utterance of those words. Nor is it necessarily a matter of ceasing to coordinate closely with Israel, or of no longer sharing our plans with Jerusalem in advance. But enjoying a special relationship with Israel and being an effective and fair broker are not incompatible; in fact, to the extent that peace with its Arab neighbors is a vital interest to Israel, they ought to be viewed as going hand in hand. At the same time, Washington does nobody a favor by putting forward ideas that are sure to offend even the most open-minded Palestinian.

There is regrettable precedent to go by. At the 2000 Camp David summit, the United States assessed proposals based on how far Israel had moved from its initial positions rather than on how far it still would have to go. Four years later, in a letter to then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the Bush administration took a stance on territorial and refugee issues that displayed virtually no sensitivity to Palestinian concerns—cherry-picking from among the various compromises only those that the Palestinians would have to make (no return of refugees to Israel, for instance, and recognition of the fact that some settlements would be annexed by Israel) and announcing them in the wake of discussions with Israel from which Palestinians were deliberately excluded. The net result was to further erode U.S. credibility and status as an honest broker, jeopardize efforts to mobilize pragmatic Palestinians, and make more difficult eventual Palestinian acceptance of compromises that moderates will have wanted to sell as a fair deal and militants will have wanted to denounce as an imposed one.

3 SET YOUR OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY UP FRONT—AND STICK TO THEM.

Prior to the Camp David summit of 2000, the Clinton team had settled on an approach, and appeared determined to pursue it, until objections—sometimes Israeli, sometimes Palestinian, often both—derailed it. This gave rise to a bumper-style diplomacy in which the United States allowed itself to run into hurdles rather than jump over them. Being flexible is one thing; being malleable is another—and being so does a favor neither to us, nor to the parties, nor to the peace process. Expect Israeli and Palestinian leaders to protest on matters of substance and process—they have to, and they will. But that should not be a showstopper.

The United States needs to decide for itself—either now or during the next administration, and on the basis of its national-security interests—what it is seeking to accomplish; acknowledge the domestic and international political capital it will need to expend to reach that goal; anticipate healthy criticism; commit to a process; and then, mindful of remaining the master of its own policy, tenaciously pursue it.

4 DON'T FLY SOLO.

The United States may be the principal outside player, but it is not the only one. This was made plain in 2000, when Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat was asked to agree to compromises on the question of sovereignty over Jerusalem's holy sites, which he could not do alone and for which he lacked the necessary Arab and Muslim backing. In the interim, the need for involvement by Arab countries has become, if anything, greater

Not everything in the region would be cured as a result of a credible Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but virtually nothing can be cured without it.

given the fragmentation of the Palestinian political scene and the relative weakness of the Palestinian leadership. It has also grown given Israel's increased lack of trust in the Palestinians and concomitant desire for normalized relations with all Arab states as a quid pro quo for territorial compromise.

A key task for the U.S. administration should be to coordinate closely and early with key Arab countries. This has been made easier by the Arab world's willingness to engage more proactively due to regional developments, as evidenced by the Arab peace initiative—a commitment by all Arab states to normalize relations with Israel once a comprehensive regional peace settlement is achieved.

In particular, should the United States decide to present final status parameters, it ought to make plain that it will do so only if Arab countries commit in advance to publicly defend and promote them. This will not be easy: Six years of desultory U.S. diplomacy—coupled with four years of a tragic Iraqi adventure—has wiped out much of America's credibility with its Arab allies. A sustained effort to convince the Arabs that the United States is serious and that it will carry through on its pledges will be required to obtain the necessary reciprocal commitments.

Along with the Arab world, Europeans and others need to be involved, and not as a mere afterthought. In the past, the United States has tended to appear hat-in-hand, expecting last-minute financial support once political deals were made. That's unlikely to take it very far. U.S. allies must feel they have a stake in the success of any peace initiative if they are to do their share—whether in terms of international endorsement of the agreement; monetary assistance to finance Palestine's reconstruction and long-term development (or to create a fund for Palestinian refugees); a multinational military or police presence to monitor compliance with an eventual agreement and deter violations; or the establishment of special relations between the European Union on the one hand and Israel and Palestine on the other.

Palestinian acceptance of any agreement will be greatly facilitated if it has been endorsed and legitimized by the United Nations through a Security Council resolution, the Arab League, and by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, just as Israel's acceptance will be made easier if its public sees that an accord will trigger relations with the broader Arab and Muslim worlds. Ultimately, the aim should be to make the benefits of an agreement as tangible, real, and attractive as possible.

5 DON'T GET SPOOKED BY DOMESTIC ISRAELI POLITICS.

The one constant of recent Israeli politics has been its inconsistency. What began in the mid-1990s as perpetual instability has since bordered on systemic crisis. The breakdown began when a change in Israel's electoral rules coincided with deepening socioeconomic trends of marginalization and a new wave

of immigration. The result has been a fragmented political mapping, the strengthening of political parties catering to narrow sectarian or ethnic constituencies (Russian, Sephardic-religious, anticlerical, Arab), the decline of the two dominant movements (Likud and Labor), and an inability to form stable governing blocs.

Over the years, U.S. officials have become experts in, fashioned themselves micromanagers of, and ended up paralyzed by the famously complicated Israeli political system. How often have Israeli officials invoked the fragility of the coalition du jour to argue against a given U.S. initiative, warning it would simultaneously torpedo the government and usher in a more right-wing successor? And how often have U.S. officials taken the bait?

It is in the nature of Israel's democracy to be vibrant, unpredictable, and utterly unmanageable. That is sometimes good (as when an independent commission holds the government accountable for its mismanagement of the Lebanon war), and sometimes less so (as when all government action is seemingly halted as an entire nation awaits the cabinet's fate). The United States cannot afford to shape its actions on the basis of the latest poll or coalition maneuver. Instead, and without being oblivious to political realities, Washington should remind itself that a credible peace plan enjoying strong American backing can count on majority Israeli public support. This, rather than the latest round of cabinet musical chairs, is what should guide U.S. policy-makers.

6 LEAVE PALESTINIAN POLITICS TO THE PALESTINIANS.

Just as it has suffered from excessive knowledge of Israeli politics, the United States has been hamstrung by insufficient knowledge of Palestinian politics. To Americans, they are unfamiliar, both complex and fluid, with ever-shifting alliances and loyalties. Sources of power and legitimacy, as well as the modalities of political behavior, are seldom straightforward, a function of overlapping geographical, generational, historical, and ideological considerations. And this is at the best of times, without taking into account Fatah's more recent fragmentation, Hamas' ascent, and the assertion of numerous militias, tribes, and families.

There often will be temptation to play Palestinian politics, especially when parts of the leadership appear nonresponsive to U.S. pressures or, worse, hostile to U.S. interests. And there rarely will be a shortage of Palestinian leaders offering themselves up as potential allies in the hope that ties to the United States will strengthen their hand in the domestic competition. Yet every time the United States has sought to meddle, the meddling has backfired, with results ranging from the ineffective to the outright counterproductive. Lack of understanding is part of the reason, but part only. Added to that is the reality

that America's embrace can do more harm than good to those it seeks to benefit. Attempts to isolate and bypass Arafat, to mention but one glaring example, not only failed to reduce his standing; they also contributed to Fatah's fragmentation and to the loss of U.S. credibility and leverage.

Rather than waste its resources seeking to manage a political game that is beyond both its understanding and control, the United States should focus on promoting a more successful peace process. Over the long run, there is no better or surer way to influence the Palestinian political landscape.

7 DON'T VIEW THE DOMESTIC JEWISH COMMUNITY THROUGH A MONOLITHIC PRISM.

The domestic political risks of the Arab-Israeli peace process have been called the third rail of American politics, but that term is extraordinarily reductive and misleading, simultaneously flattering and dis-serving the Jewish community: There is flattery (at least of a kind) in ascribing to that community the sort of omnipotence that often is assumed, and there is disservice in suggesting that all American Jews are of one mind (the most intransigent mind) when it comes to the Middle East.

True, the most vocal and organized groups tend to advocate the most rigid policies, and they tend to enjoy disproportionate political influence, most notably in Congress. This, for good reason, inspires caution within the executive branch, which is loath to expend political capital and provoke an unwanted political distraction for the sake of an uncertain gain. Yet poll after poll suggests that the vast majority of American Jews support Israel, oppose settlements, favor territorial compromise, and prefer diplomatic solutions to military ones (and American engagement to disengagement) in order to further these goals. The key is for the administration to have a clear strategic vision and to articulate it in terms of defending U.S. national interests without compromising Israel's. If it does so, American Jewish support is certain to follow.

8 DIAL DAMASCUS.

Although the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it cannot be resolved in a vacuum. Within the limits of its reach—and its reach into Palestine has only grown as the Palestinian political system has become increasingly permeable—Syria has proved time and again its nuisance and spoiling capacity. If Damascus feels marginalized and snubbed, it will do what it can to torpedo progress between the Israelis and the Palestinians; that likely will entail promoting violence from among a plethora of militant groups and engaging in unhelpful diplomacy in the Arab diplomatic arena.

Conversely, U.S. engagement with Syria—and support for a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations—should give Damascus reason to curb hostile activities by its allies, many of whom are heavily dependent on Syrian support. In this context, the Bush administration's decision to discourage Israel from dealing with Syria is both unprecedented (never before has the United States stood in the way of an Arab country's call for unconditional peace talks) and unwise. For Israel to achieve comprehensive normalization with all Arab states, it will need

to achieve comprehensive peace with all its Arab neighbors. That, inevitably, will have to include Syria.

9 PAY STRATEGIC ATTENTION TO EVENTS ON THE GROUND.

Managing everyday issues and immediate Israeli and Palestinian concerns on the ground should not be a substitute for pursuing a comprehensive agreement. Checkpoints, closures, the existence of armed Palestinian militias—all are a function of the existing political context, and none can be genuinely solved without transforming that context through a permanent-status arrangement. At the same time, these issues have a way of forcing themselves on to the agenda, undermining the credibility of any political process while reducing the willingness or ability of actors to move.

In short, developments on the ground should neither be ignored nor invoked to stymie negotiations. Instead, strategic U.S. intervention on the most damaging day-to-day issues should complement the pursuit of a permanent political settlement.

10 MAKE THIS PEACE A PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITY.

Dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict is never cost-free—not domestically, given the sensitivities and emotions involved, and not internationally, given the closeness of America's alliance with Israel and the complexity of America's relationship with the Arab world. For that reason, a decision must be made to invest serious political capital, and that decision can only be made and conveyed by the president.

Presidential engagement does not necessarily mean daily presidential involvement. Some have argued that President Clinton invested himself too much in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, that his exhaustive knowledge of and enthusiasm for the minutest details of the talks ultimately devalued him when—as at Camp David—the stakes became higher and his leverage more necessary. That may or may not be the case.

What cannot be doubted is that unless and until the American president is convinced that tackling the Arab-Israeli conflict is central to U.S. interests, that America's standing in the region and capacity to curb the growth of radicalism depend in large part on American efforts to resolve it, and that our efforts will be worth the unavoidable political costs, nothing will happen. That is to say, nothing good, nothing lasting, and nothing safe. **TAP**

Daniel Levy is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and the Century Foundation. He served as an adviser in the Israeli prime minister's office and an Israeli negotiator at the "Oslo B" and Taba negotiations. Robert Malley is the Middle East program director at the International Crisis Group. He was a special adviser to President Clinton on Arab-Israeli affairs and a member of the American team at Camp David. Ghaith al-Omari is a senior research fellow at the New America Foundation. He was an adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and a Palestinian negotiator from the late 1990s until last year.

Past Failures, Future Possibilities

A lasting peace between Israel and Palestine cannot be achieved by Israelis and Palestinians. It requires the strong engagement of the U.S. and the international community.

BY SHLOMO BEN-AMI

IT IS THE TOTAL AND ABSOLUTE NATURE OF THE ISRAELI-Palestinian conflict that has made it into such a protracted dispute. For it is not just a collision over territory, or a banal border dispute; it is a clash of rights and memory. The longing for the same landscapes, the mutually exclusive claims of ownership of land and religious sites and symbols, and the ethos of dispossession for which the two parties claim a monopoly make their national narratives practically irreconcilable with each other. Yet it is also a war of images, contrasted and demonized images, a struggle between two nationalist mythologies, both of them claiming the monopoly of justice and martyrdom. The history of Jewish disasters and the way Zionism has instrumentalized them was a lesson the Palestinians were quick to absorb. “Expulsion,” “exile,” “diaspora,” “holocaust,” “return,” and “genocide” are Israeli-Jewish constituent watchwords that also became an inextricable part of the Palestinian national ethos.

This should help explain one key difference: Peacemaking with such Arab states as Egypt and Syria is a strictly political undertaking based on the restitution of territory, while peacemaking with the Palestinians is an attempt to break the genetic code of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and perhaps even of the Jewish-Muslim dispute, by touching religious and historical certificates of ownership. Yasir Arafat’s failure to bring peace to his people had much to do with his intrinsic resistance to being the first and only Arab leader to recognize the unique historical and religious roots of the bond of the Jews to their millenarian homeland and to their holy shrines. The Palestinian constituent ethos of the right of return and Islamic values beyond land and real estate were the insurmountable obstacles that prevented an agreement at Camp David and later at Taba.

Political breakthroughs in such protracted conflicts require a stage of ripeness in both societies that can occur only when all other alternatives have been exhausted and the parties have learned the need for compromise the hard way—through trial and error. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, this ripeness reflected the disintegrating and corrupting effects of occupation on the one hand, and on the other, the incapacity of the occupied to bring about the unconditional capitulation of its

enemy through a popular rebellion and international pressure.

Yitzhak Rabin was convinced that a narrow window of opportunity existed for an Israeli-Palestinian peace before Hamas becomes the hegemonic power among the Palestinians and an Iranian-inspired wave of Islamic fundamentalism brings down the moderate regimes of the region. This conviction led him to strike a deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization in Oslo. But his determination to break taboos that were deeply embedded in the Israeli mind unleashed hopes for peace that would tragically be dashed by a most fundamental flaw in the Oslo process: the divergent expectations of the parties.

For his part, Arafat deserves credit for initiating the political process by his endorsement, in 1988, of the two-state solution. Alas, he also established nonnegotiable conditions for a settlement with Israel from which he never deviated. To him, the “peace process” was not meant to be an open-ended track of give and take. Through his historic compromise of 1988, Arafat had already “given”; now, he had only to “take”—a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders, the right of return for the refugees, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. The Israelis—including Rabin, who signed the Oslo Accords with Arafat—by no means concurred with his interpretation of the peace process.

However creative and even epoch-making the Oslo Accords might have been, they also contained the seeds of their own destruction. Ambiguous, cumbersome, full of lacunae—an Israeli politician defined them as a Swiss cheese with more holes than cheese—and essentially built on the unequal relations between the occupied and the occupier, Oslo unleashed expectations that were too high, and were consequently bound to crash into the rock of conflicting national dreams. The failure was compounded by the inconsistencies and the dysfunction of Israel’s political system on the one hand, and on the other, the Palestinians’ incapacity to move away from revolutionary politics and develop the tools of modern governance.

The divergent assumptions of the Oslo peace process bequeathed additional fallacies to the teams that were later to negotiate the final settlement at Camp David and Taba. The incremental nature of the process left the shape of the final agreement wide open, certainly in the perception of the Israe-

lis, and hence encouraged their governments to persist in their policies of fait accomplis in the territories. By creating a dense map of settlements throughout the territories that narrowed the living space of the Palestinian people, Israel destroyed beyond repair the faith of its Palestinian partners in the peace process. Loyal to the archaic Zionist philosophy, according to which the last kindergarten also defines the political border, the Israelis tried to influence the nature of the final agreement by a hectic policy of settlement expansion. This strategy was, and continues to be, the most absurd march of folly that the State of Israel has ever embarked on. Not surprisingly, the Palestinians responded with terrorism. It was this fatal symmetry between settlements and terrorism that became the hallmark of the Oslo years.

So the negotiating process for a final settlement fell victim to the conflicting interpretations of what exactly were the premises upon which it was built. The Israelis came to the negotiations embracing the letter of the Oslo Accords, the premise of an open-ended process without preconceived solutions. For the Palestinians, this was a simple, clear-cut process of decolonization based on “international legitimacy” and “UN relevant resolutions.” But neither Rabin nor Shimon Peres thought that Oslo had unleashed a process that was subject to such concepts. Nor did they think that the process should usher in a full-fledged Palestinian state.

Constructive ambiguity facilitated an agreement in Oslo at the price of creating potential irreconcilable misconceptions about the final settlement. The Israeli negotiators of a final status agreement at Camp David and Taba came to solve the problems created by the 1967 War, and were surprised to stumble on the Palestinians’ assertion of the intractable issues of 1948, first and foremost the refugees’ right of return.

WITH THE FAILURE OF THE PEACE PROCESS, THE two peoples returned to the bloodiest confrontation since 1948. Israelis and Palestinians reverted to the fundamentalist roots of the conflict, to a primordial struggle, to believing that the salvation of one could be founded only on the destruction of the other. For the Palestinians, the Second Intifada has developed into a struggle to end the occupation by shaping a constituent myth of national and Islamic independence. Exposed to indiscriminate waves of suicide terrorism, the Israelis lost any hope of a negotiated settlement, and in their despair succumbed to a new self-defeating political religion—that of unilateral disengagement. Humiliated by Israeli retribution, with the backbone of their society broken, and in response to



Nobels, No Resolution: Yasir Arafat, Shimon Peres, and Yitzhak Rabin, with their peace prizes, 1994.

the sad vicissitudes of deficient governance, the Palestinians embraced the Hamas option. The ascendancy of Hamas was greatly enhanced by Ariel Sharon’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, for it proved the argument that armed resistance succeeded where the PLO philosophy of negotiations had failed. There were lessons there for the Israelis as well.

For against the ominous predictions of civil war looming over Israel if a massive dismantling of settlements were carried out, the mostly peaceful Gaza disengagement proved to be an anticlimax. Especially shocking to the settlers’ community was the overwhelming support throughout the nation for the uprooting of the Gush Katif settlements. The lords of the land for so many years, these settlers developed a hubris that was increasingly out of tune with Israel’s longing for a normalcy that could only be brought about by disengagement from Palestinian lands. The notion finally reached Israelis that this Jewish republic of settlers on the golden sands of Gaza and the hilltops of Judea and Samaria had become an unbearable burden that has drained the resources of the nation and doomed it to a suicidal confrontation with the Palestinians. Once considered a patriotic vanguard, the settlements now became an obstacle that needed to be removed, an entanglement that needed to be untied, if Israel were to maintain its Jewish and democratic character. In the summer of 2005, Israel looked like a society mature enough to face the formidable challenge of defining its final borders without cataclysmic upheaval. The precedent was established, and for the first time since 1967, the “State of Israel” challenged “Eretz Israel”—and survived.

But then came the summer of 2006, and the fierce and humiliating war with Hezbollah. Israel thus found itself fighting on two

The total incapacity of the parties to take even the smallest step toward each other makes an international framework for peace the last and only way out of this dangerous impasse.

fronts—against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon—a situation that dealt a mortal blow to the pursuit of unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank, as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had planned to do. The sad lessons of the Gaza disengagement meant that Qassam missiles being launched from a new front line in the West Bank against Israel's major urban centers in the greater Tel Aviv area could no longer be seen as a far-fetched scenario. If Olmert still wanted to save his "convergence plan" (the idea of withdrawing unilaterally from large areas in the West Bank), he could have tried to coordinate it in exchange for a long-term truce (hudna) with a Palestinian partner. That partner could be only the Hamas government or a Fatah-Hamas national unity cabinet. Though Israel and Hamas are still united by a profound skepticism with regard to the peace process, both have reasons to support an extended truce.

An extended truce would certainly have allowed Hamas to reconcile its ideological rejection of Israel with a major step toward "the end of occupation," while gaining the vital breathing space necessary to address a domestic agenda that was, after all, the main reason people voted for them. For its part, an Israeli government ready to depart from the inertia of incursions and targeted killings could have drawn strength from a poll published just before the 2006 summer war indicating that no less than 45 percent of Israelis were ready to support direct negotiations with Hamas. In practical terms, this meant allowing Hamas to exercise the mandate it received from the Palestinian people to govern. But rather than engaging Hamas, both the United States and Israel precipitated its return to the battlefield after a long absence, precisely by doing all they could to topple Ismail Hanyeh's government. The negation of Hamas' right to govern, not the organization's ideological rejection of Israel, is what drove Hamas back to the battlefield.

But, notwithstanding some confusing contradictions in its current discourse, Hamas is definitely on its way to assuming the culture of political compromise. A diminishing commitment to the organization's core goals—and a scaling down of its expectations regarding, for example, the creation of an Islamist state—can definitely be detected. The Mecca agreement of February 8 for the establishment of a Palestinian national unity government was not a full and unequivocal endorsement of the requirements of Israel and the international community (explicit recognition of Israel and of past agreements, and an end to terrorism), but it certainly meant the endorsement of a new political language on the basis of which Hamas can be incorporated into a peace deal based on a two-state solution.

WHAT OF THE U.S. ROLE? UNTIL RECENTLY, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has taken a line diametrically opposed to that of President Clinton, who devoted his entire presidency to persistent efforts to reach a peaceful settlement between the parties. Condoleezza

Rice's recent peace missions to the Middle East are a long-overdue attempt to offer a political horizon to Israelis and Palestinians. It took President Bush six long years of failed policies in the Middle East to assume that the alliance of the moderates in the region can be forged only through an Arab-Israeli peace, and that only by effectively addressing the Israeli-Arab dispute might he still be able to salvage America's standing in the region. The current effort at peacemaking by Secretary Rice, however, comes too late in the political life of a president who, defeated at home and abroad, is practically a lame duck; it is also ill-conceived, and hardly convincing.

The Bush administration's "road map" assumed incremental progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state. It did not, however, offer a clear outline of the final peace deal in crucial matters such as borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. The parties were never convinced that the road map could lead to a comprehensive peace settlement, and so they never really collaborated in good faith to promote the plan. Too susceptible to procrastination and evasion by the two sides, the road map was stillborn. Almost four years after it was first drawn, neither party has been able to gather the political will necessary for the implementation of its most primary provisions—those calling for Israel to dismantle its illegal outposts in the occupied territories and for the Palestinians to fight terrorism.

Nor can the bizarre idea reserved for the second stage of the road map, of a Palestinian state with "temporary borders," be seen as especially enticing by the Palestinians. And, even if the Palestinians would be ready to contemplate the possibility of "temporary borders," the fragility of the dysfunctional political systems in both Israel and Palestine is such that it would wreck the entire enterprise. For a central lesson of the failed Oslo process is that the entire concept of a piecemeal progress to peace requires the parties to pay such a prohibitive political price that they might better opt for the final settlement at once.

True, we tried a final-settlement strategy at Camp David and Taba, and we failed. But over time, a gradual process of trial and error has made clear the imperatives of peace. Fifteen years after the Madrid conference began a formal peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, the parties are wiser as to what is inevitable if this tortuous process is to lead to a permanent settlement. In 1991, they concurred on a platform of "land for peace." But the Israelis never believed they would have to give back all the land, while the Arabs did not think they might have to offer "all the peace." Today, at long last, everyone knows what is meant by "land," and everyone knows what is meant by "peace": Land can only mean a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, and peace means the end of conflict and the finality of claims.

TWO CENTRAL LESSONS NEED TO BE DRAWN FROM THE failure of the peace process so far. The first is that in bilateral negotiations, Israelis and Palestinians have shown themselves utterly incapable of reconciling themselves to each other's fundamental requirements for peace. The second is that interim agreements did not serve to establish trust; they became only a trigger for further conflict.

This Gordian knot can no longer be untied; it needs to be cut. The concept of interim agreements has now become utterly obsolete. What is called for is a second partition of Palestine under international supervision. Only a reverse engineering, starting at the end and working backward, might still save this process from irreversible ruin.

A tragedy of this conflict is that the only man, Yasir Arafat, whose signature on an agreement of compromise and reconciliation—which would include giving up unattainable dreams—could have been legitimate in the eyes of his people was incapable of bringing himself to sign. Arafat took this legitimacy with him to the grave, and he left his heirs with the same positions and the same ethos on which compromise will be beyond their capacity to reach. That is his terrible legacy. If the all-powerful Arafat attributed such great importance to having an international umbrella escort him to the altar of an agreement, does it seem probable that lesser figures, saddled with such difficult terms of inheritance, would be able on their own to cast off the ethos of the right of return and the Temple

Mount without a tight-fitting envelope of support from the international community, especially from the neighboring Arab states and the Palestinians' allies in Europe? Arabs and Israelis would simply not be able to independently accommodate themselves to each other's minimal requirements for peace.

The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies in an outline that is embodied in the main peace plans on the table: the Clinton peace parameters and the all-Arab peace initiative of 2002, recently reconfirmed by the Arab League in its Riyadh summit March 28–29. The inadequacy of a strictly bilateral approach was well understood by the initiators of the all-Arab peace initiative. That initiative is, most importantly, a call to regionalize the solution to the conflict after the bilateral approach ended in failure. The loss of mutual trust between the parties and their total incapacity to take even the smallest step toward each other, let alone to observe their commitments without being nursed by third parties, make the creation of an international framework for peace the last and only way out of this dangerous impasse.

The end of bilateralism stems also from the deficiencies of what are desperately dysfunctional political systems, both in Palestine and in Israel. Rather than serving as the vehicle for the solution of the conflict, they have been major obstacles to peace. Gasping for political oxygen under the pressure of Hamas, and unable to have his national unity government accepted as an interlocutor by Israel and the United States, Mahmoud Abbas has less chance than ever to lead his nation to statehood and peace.

As for Israel, on a recent trip to Jerusalem, Rice had to listen to four different peace plans from Olmert's ministers. Achieving internal peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike might still prove to be as formidable a task as achieving peace between them. The Israelis, never the friends of an international solution, might draw consolation from the simple truth that unilateralism has failed in both Iraq and in Gaza, and that none of the major problems of the Middle East are susceptible to bilateral solutions. They all call for a multilateral effort.

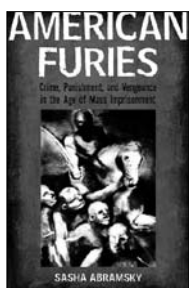
As the launching of the Arab-Israeli peace process in Madrid has shown, the prospects for peace in the Middle East have always waited for a concerted international effort to exploit windows of opportunity. Wars in the Middle East—especially those that did not end conclusively, like Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon and against Hamas in Gaza—have almost invariably created the conditions for major political breakthroughs, for they taught us the limits of what power can achieve.

Thrown into one of its most dangerous crises in recent times, and immersed in a momentous struggle between the forces of peaceful change and those committed to doomsday politics, the Middle East calls once again for a major international effort at peacemaking before we all drug ourselves into collective perdition. **TAP**

Shlomo Ben-Ami is a former Israeli foreign minister who negotiated with the Palestinians, under President Clinton's mediation, at Camp David, and later led the Israeli delegation for the Taba talks. He now serves as the vice president of the Toledo International Centre for Peace and is the author of Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy.

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The Shia Fellas

How the Bush Administration and the Neocons got into bed with Iran's agents in Iraq

BY ROBERT DREYFUSS

BACK IN 2004, PRESIDENT BUSH WENT ON NBC'S *MEET the Press* to assure Americans that Iraq was not going to turn into an Islamist theocracy under the emerging Shia leadership.

"They're not going to develop that," said Bush, noting that he'd just met Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). "I remember speaking to Mr. al-Hakim. I said, 'You know, I'm a Methodist. What are my chances of success in your country and your vision?' And he said, 'It's going to be a free society where you can worship freely.'"

Added the president: "This is a Shia fellow."

No matter that the president actually said "fella," inadvertently pronouncing the Arab word for "peasant." Even by then it was clear, and by now it is blindingly obvious, that not only is there no room for Methodists in Hakim's Iraq; there isn't much room for Sunni Arabs, either. Indeed, the central irony of the war in Iraq is that a military operation ostensibly designed to install a model democracy in Baghdad has created a regime dominated by benighted Shia Islamist theocrats and run by mullahs and activists allied with Iran.

Bush perhaps can be forgiven his naïveté about Hakim—though the fact that the name of Hakim's organization includes the words "Islamic Revolution" might have tipped him off. Others, however—including the hawks promoting the war in 2001–03—were fully informed about al-Hakim, SCIRI, and its origins in Iran. They knew that by toppling Saddam Hussein, they would unleash the Shia majority in Iraq. They knew that Al Dawa ("the Call"), the party of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, had a long history as a terrorist-inclined Islamist secret society. They'd read the reams of intelligence dossiers—compiled over decades by the U.S. intelligence community—on SCIRI, Al Dawa, and their allies. And they had plenty of evidence that Ahmad Chalabi, the smooth-talking Shiite who brought SCIRI and Dawa into the inner circle of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), was a snake-oil salesman who made no secret of his own close ties to Tehran's ruling circles.

Today, virtually all of Iran's leading Shia political and religious leaders are either kowtowing to Tehran, beholden to Iran for support, or fearful of challenging Iran's dominant role. "Iran has leads into every single Shia group," says Ali Allawi, a longtime Shia opposition leader who served as Iraq's first postwar civilian min-

ister of defense. "They have leads into ... SCIRI, into Dawa—one of its wings is far more dependent on Iran than the other—into [Muqtada] al-Sadr, and into politicians like Ahmad Chalabi."

All of which raises some obvious questions: How could the neoconservatives, bitter enemies of Iran's ayatollahs, have supported the rise to power of Iran's closest allies? Why, even after it became clear that their Iraq adventure had gone awry, did they continue to defend the Shia religious parties and Chalabi? And why, even today, does the White House use its "surge" to prop up Maliki's government, Hakim, and the SCIRI Islamists? Despite the government's pretensions to neutrality in the Sunni-Shia civil war, American forces are objectively backing one side in that war.

"Maliki's objective in the surge is for the Americans to kill as many Sunnis as possible, and do as little damage as possible to the Badr Corps and the Mahdi Army," says Bruce Riedel, a longtime CIA officer who ran Near East affairs at the National Security Council under President Bush until 2002, referring to the militias of SCIRI and Sadr. "And what you're seeing happening in Baghdad is exactly that: The Badr Corps and the Mahdi Army are staying off the streets, waiting for the surge to kill the Sunnis. What I don't know is whether [General David] Petraeus knows this as well. I can't tell."

TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE NEOCONSERVATIVES AND MANY OF THEIR allies were so sanguine about the Shia rise to power in Iraq, it's necessary to grasp three fatally flawed assumptions that shaped their view.

First, the neocons and some Israeli strategists had long seen the Shia as "outsiders" opposed to the mainstream Arab (read: Sunni) nationalist current, and over decades had developed an affinity for the Shia as potential allies in the region, much as they saw the Lebanese Maronite Christians and other minorities in the Arab world.

"There existed a supercilious 'Shiaphilia' among certain academics, Iraqi political exiles, policy wonks and policymakers linked to the Bush administration," wrote Ahmed Hashim, author of *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq* and a professor of strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College. At the American Enterprise Institute and among partisans of Chalabi's INC, it was routine to speak of "de-Arabizing" Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein, a favorite theme of the INC's favored intellectual, Kanan Makiya.

Second, the neocons had been seduced by Chalabi, who convinced them that Iraq's Shia leaders would abandon their ties to Iran and rush to embrace a secular, pro-American political culture. Vali Nasr, author of *The Shia Revival* and a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, attributes this to the neocons' "reading of the Israeli experience in the invasion of south Lebanon in 1982. That's why they had this vocabulary of 'They're going to greet us with flowers,' because that's what happened in south Lebanon—the Israeli army was greeted by Shia villagers with flowers and rice."

Third, the neocons believed that moderate, nonpolitical Shia in Iraq would establish Najaf, the Iraqi shrine city that is the holiest place in Shia Islam, as a new center of gravity that would overpower Qom, the clerical powerhouse city in Iran. They believed that the "good Shia," supposedly "quietist" ayatollahs such as Ali al-Sistani, would emerge to present a frontal challenge to Iran's militant "bad Shia," followers of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. A leading proponent of this theory was David Wurmser, a radical neocon who is currently Vice President Cheney's top Middle East adviser. "They deluded themselves into thinking that these links operated only one way—with Najaf undermining Qom," says Nasr. "They assumed that it was Iraq that would influence Iran, not that Iran would influence Iraq."

On the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, many astute observers of the Middle East were aghast at the prospect of American action haphazardly bringing Iran-linked political Shia fundamentalists to power. "In the prewar period we held a number of meetings and confrontations with prominent Arabs, and they were shocked at how American policy-makers were quite prepared to see a Shia-dominated Iraq," says Patrick Clawson, a neoconservative scholar and Middle East expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Israelis and moderate Arabs alike came to Washington to underline that message, says Clawson. "What I found repeatedly was they would make the rounds in Washington, and they would be in shock at just how much the U.S. government had thought about that, and decided that that was OK."

In March 2003, during the feverish run-up to the invasion of Iraq, it wasn't as if the U.S. intelligence community didn't have the goods on Iraq's Islamist exiles. "People who'd followed this issue for a while at the CIA and the State Department ... knew that [SCIRI and its paramilitary arm, the Badr Organization] were extremely close to the Iranians and had spent more than 20 years either in Tehran or in Damascus, with very close relations to Iran, or in Europe, in places where they were closely affiliated with Iranian intelligence," says Riedel. "The SCIRI representative in London, Hamid Bayati, had very close relations with Iranian intelligence ... The facts were well known within the national-security bureaucracy."

Bush can be forgiven for his naïveté about Hakim—though the fact that the name of Hakim's organization includes the words "Islamic revolution" might have tipped him off.

THE STORY OF SKIRI AND DAWA IS A TALE OF TWO families, the Hakims and the Sadrs, two of Iraq's most prominent religious dynasties. In some ways, especially today, the Hakims and the Sadrs are like the Hatfields and the McCoy's: feuding clans that hold decades-old grudges. That partly explains the current enmity between Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim of SCIRI and the upstart cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army.

The Dawa Party was created in 1957–58, as the pro-British Iraqi monarchy crumbled to a coalition of Iraqi army officers and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). At the time, the ICP was the largest communist party in the Middle East, capable of bringing a million people into the streets, and the vast majority of its members were Iraqi Shia. Young Shia, then flooding Baghdad from the mostly Shia tribal countryside, were the backbone of the ICP; many joined the fledgling Baath Party, too. Desperate to stanch the Shia flow into the ICP and the Baath, the leading ayatollahs of Najaf's Hawza—a "Vatican"-like Shia institution—established the Dawa Party to mobilize Shia youth in opposition to communists, Baathists, and the nationalist left. Its chief founders were a pair of ayatollahs who were the granddaddies of today's Hakim and Sadr clans: Mohsen al-Hakim and Mohammed Baqr al-Sadr.

In 1960, the entire leadership of the political Shia Islamist movement for the next half century in Iraq got its start in the Dawa Party and a parallel institution called the Jamaat al-Ulama, both of whose original meetings took place in the homes of Sadr and Hakim. Sadr wrote the Dawa Party's founding principles, and Hakim's sons—Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim (known as Sadr I), the founder of SCIRI, and Mohsen al-Hakim—became two of Dawa's leading organizers. Both Hakim and Sadr were anti-communist ideologues, and their Jamaat organization routinely issued pamphlets with titles like "Communism is the Enemy of the People." In 1960, Sadr I proclaimed a famous fatwa banning Iraqis from belonging to the ICP. That got the attention of Cold War U.S. diplomats in Baghdad, who held tête-à-têtes with Mohsen al-Hakim back then, according to Allawi.

Ironically, writes Faleh A. Jabar, in *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, "[Dawa's] founding group sought to create a Leninist organization based on cells, chain of command, discipline, and obedience." Over the next two decades, Dawa would engage in a clandestine war against a series of Iraqi governments, including Saddam Hussein's. Its partisans frequently engaged in terrorist violence, and they were met with brutal repression in response. When the 1979 Iranian revolution drastically raised tensions between Iran and Iraq, where the Ayatollah Khomeini had spent 14 years in exile in Najaf, Saddam Hussein made Dawa Party membership a capital offense, and in 1980, he arrested and executed Sadr I. Many Shia were expelled or fled to Iran, where Khomeini was threatening to spread Iran's Islamic theocracy into Iraq.

The Sadr branch of Dawa, for the most part, stayed in Iraq,



Our Guy? SCIRI leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim with U.S. President George Bush, Washington, December 2006.

where it organized under the radar until 2003. The Hakim branch, on the other hand, fled to Iran, and an important rivalry began to develop between the two branches. Whereas the Sadrs took pride in their determination to resist Saddam Hussein inside Iraq, the Hakims hitched their wagon to Iran. SCIRI was founded in 1982, in Tehran, by the Ayatollah Khomeini and placed under the control of the Iranian intelligence service, SAVAMA, and Iran's Revolutionary Guard, with Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim and Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, sons of Mohsen al-Hakim, at its helm. Soon afterward, the Revolutionary Guard created the Badr Corps (which later changed its name to the Badr Organization), mobilizing thousands of Iraqi Shia from POW camps that swelled during the Iran-Iraq war.

"SCIRI's military and intelligence units were both actually managed by Iranians," according to Jabar. "With the creation of the Faylaq Badr [Badr Corps], intelligence and military affairs were taken from these units and conveyed to Badr. Despite SCIRI's talk of the Badr Army as an Iraqi organization, the force was under Iranian command. The commander of the force was an Iranian colonel." Specifically, Hakim's chief sponsor in Iran was the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, then president of Iran, who in 1989 succeeded Khomeini as Iran's supreme leader, the position he still holds today.

Wayne White, who headed the State Department's intelligence unit on Iraq in 2003, had closely followed the rise of SCIRI and Badr in the 1980s. "Starting in 1982, we were getting a pretty good picture of the political part of it, and its leadership," says White, adding that the Iranians saw SCIRI as a potential pro-Iranian government-in-exile. For its first few years, explains White, Badr was poorly trained and disorganized, but by 1985 it had started to become a lot more professional. Perhaps 10,000 Iraqis made up the Badr force in the 1980s but the Iranians threw them into battle against their former country without regard for casualties. The Badr Corps "was badly decimated by the end of the war," says White.

In 1987, *The New York Times* reported that Khomeini "is believed to have a provisional Islamic revolutionary government under an exiled Iraqi Shiite Moslem clergyman, Ayatollah Baqr Hakim, waiting to be installed in Basra." A year later, at a Tehran soccer stadium, Baqr Hakim addressed a captive audience of Iraqi POWs, who chanted: "Under the leadership of Khomeini, we would like to fight!"

The evidence was incontrovertible: SCIRI and Badr were Iranian tools. Because the United States had tilted toward Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, opponents of Saddam Hussein—particularly Islamist ones tied to Iran—were viewed unfavorably in Washington. That, however, began to change in the 1990s, in the aftermath of the U.S.-Iraq showdown over Kuwait.

FROM THE END OF THE GULF WAR, IN 1991, UNTIL THE INVASION of Iraq, in 2003, both SCIRI and Dawa executed a deft pas de deux with the United States, conducting a dialogue that included off-the-record contacts, hallway meetings, and—starting in 1998, with the passage of the neocon-inspired Iraq Liberation Act (ILA)—official relations. The unofficial ties spanned the 1991 Shia uprising in southern Iraq, in which Iran and SCIRI played a minor, supporting role; the 1992 declaration by President George Bush Senior of a "no-fly zone" in Iraq's south, which brought the United States and Iraq's Shia closer together; and the creation of an organized Iraqi opposition.

There was a great deal of mutual suspicion, particularly since SCIRI and Dawa had both been linked to terrorism in the 1980s. In 1983, Dawa and the Hakims were widely reported to be behind the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, and Al Dawa was linked to a series of hijacking and kidnappings, often in alliance with Hezbollah, a Shia movement in Lebanon whose spiritual leader was closely tied to the Sadrs. In the mid-1980s, Dawa was placed on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations.

"In 1991, when we started talking to the Iraqi opposition—and I was the senior State Department guy who dealt with them—it was agreed not to talk to Dawa," says David Mack, vice president of the Middle East Institute. Quietly, however, U.S. contacts with SCIRI proliferated.

The vehicle for these was the Iraqi National Congress, established in 1991–92 by Chalabi, with the assistance of the CIA. Although SCIRI and Dawa had an on-again/off-again relationship with the INC, Chalabi worked tirelessly to broker contacts between Washington and the Tehran-based Islamist groups. In 1992, then-CIA Director Robert Gates delivered \$30 million to the Iraqi opposition, while pressuring Saudi Arabia—a Sunni kingdom that looked askance at the Shia Islamists—to work with Hakim, according to reports at the time in *The Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Soon afterward, Saudi Arabia sent hundreds of Iraqi POWs captured in the Gulf War to Iran so they could join the forces of SCIRI's Badr Corps. By 1996, the Clinton administration had regular contacts with SCIRI through Hamid Bayati, SCIRI's London representative.

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In 1998, Chalabi, Richard Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz helped lobby the ILA through Congress, providing another stream of funds to the INC, and in 1999, SCIRI was officially designated as a qualified recipient of U.S. funds under the act. Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim made regular visits to Kuwait, where he consulted with U.S. diplomats and intelligence officers. According to Allawi, Frank Ricciardone—the State Department official who served as liaison to the Iraqi opposition in the late '90s—discreetly maintained lines of communications to SCIRI.

“The neoconservatives formed a small cell to win passage of the ILA, and money began flowing again to Chalabi,” says Laith Kubba, the senior Middle East officer at the National Endowment for Democracy. “SCIRI was part of that set up. All of this was done through this broker, Chalabi. I do not tell you this lightly. I was there.”

Kubba should know. For years, he was an Iraqi opposition insider, close to Dawa and the INC and a participant in all of the opposition's dealings with the United States. After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, he served as the official spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari. “And Chalabi was playing a double game,” says Kubba.

Chalabi didn't hide his Iranian connection. He'd opened an office in Tehran—ironically, with State Department funds. Early in 2003, I encountered Entifadh Qanbar, the INC's Washington representative and a top aide to Chalabi, at an American Enterprise Institute event. Who are you working with in Tehran? I asked. The reformers? The military? “No,” he replied. “We are working with the hard-liners,” including Khamenei.

There's no doubt that the AEI's hawks, and the Pentagon's, knew it, too. Says Bruce Riedel: “The hawks in the administration preferred to ignore this. When people like Chalabi said, ‘I'm just using the Iranians,’ they said, ‘Great.’ They took it at face value.”

DESPITE MYRIAD WARNINGS ABOUT THE DANGER posed by radical Shia Islamists in post-Saddam Iraq, the war planners moved forward. Ken Katzman, a Middle East specialist at the Congressional Research Service who worked with the U.S. intelligence community, says he personally warned policy-makers. “And I wasn't the only one,” he says. “There was a lot of writing about how if you remove the Baath Party and the Sunni repressive apparatus, you're going to be left basically with the rise of Shia Islamists.”

Warren Marik, a former CIA operative who was a liaison to Chalabi and the INC in the 1990s, is still amazed at the self-delusion that swept over administration officials. “I never talked to anyone [in the intelligence community] who had any illusion about who SCIRI and these guys were. They'd say, ‘They're horrible. They'll turn against us.’ But at the higher [policy] levels, people would say, ‘Hakim, oh, he's a great guy. He's pro-American.’”

In December 2002, the Iraqi opposition met en masse in London with a team of U.S. officials, including Zalmay Khalilzad, the White House's liaison to Iraqi exiles. Thanks to a joint decision by the Iranian government and SCIRI, Hakim's people flooded the event.

“The [London] Congress was packed with an overwhelmingly



Their Guy! SCIRI leader Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran, February 2007.

Shiite representation; all Islamists were, one way or another, invited, endorsed, or at least not rejected by SCIRI, which had veto powers,” wrote Jabar, in *The Shi’ite Movement in Iraq*.

According to David L. Phillips, author of *Losing Iraq*, who advised the State Department-led Future of Iraq Project in 2002 and who took part in the London meeting, the stunning SCIRI presence shocked U.S. officials and forced some of them, at least, to reevaluate the power alignment within the Iraqi opposition.

“When they discovered at the eleventh hour that Iran had much closer ties with these groups than we did, or ever would, the train had already left the station: The decision to go to war had already been made,” says Phillips. “The realization came home in mid-December [2002], at the London opposition conference, when Zalmay Khalilzad was trying to compose an advisory group of Iraqis. [But] ... the key groups couldn’t participate in a discussion with him until they called Tehran and got instructions.”

Adds Phillips: “Bush administration officials only saw what they wanted to see and heard what they wanted to hear—until the truth became painfully obvious.” When it did, it led directly to the decision, announced in February 2003, that the United States would not support the creation of a provisional government for Iraq, for fear that it would give too much power to the Shia Islamists. But it was too late: The war was only weeks away.

As the war and its aftermath unfolded, the United States was clearly and massively outclassed by Iran. Wrote Allawi:

Iran’s knowledge of Iraq was all-encompassing and unsurpassed. To the legion of its people with first-hand experience in Iraq, Iran had a number in its upper leadership echelons who were actually Iraqi by birth. A number of senior commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, the Pasdaran, including a deputy commander, were born and raised in Iraq ... Thousands of Iraqis were recruited into the intelligence gathering network of Iran, thus affording Iran the detailed, on the ground information base that would allow it to further refine its policies and tactics.

Thousands of SCIRI fighters crossed into Iraq in 2003. “Border control was nonexistent,” says Wayne White. “The Iranians could just drive across. Our analyst in Amarah said it was the talk of the town. But no one could do anything about it. They’d

come in convoys, 10 trucks at a time.” SCIRI militiamen took up key positions in cities across the south, and the al-Hakims returned to Iraq in a triumphal procession to Najaf.

Meanwhile, in Baghdad, SCIRI took the leading position in Shia circles, greatly aided by the U.S. occupation authorities, who brought Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim and Adel Abdul-Mahdi of SCIRI into a succession of Iraqi governments.

Before long, SCIRI and Badr became widely known for running death squads and torture prisons, often through their control of Iraq’s interior ministry. Hakim used the Bolshevik-like discipline of SCIRI to seize control of the United Iraqi Alliance, the Shia coalition that included Dawa, the Sadrists, Fadhila, and Shia independents. Hakim and Abdul-Mahdi became favored interlocutors for the White House, the State Department, and the U.S. military. After the December 2005 elections for a permanent government, the United States favored SCIRI’s Abdul-Mahdi for prime minister—and, according to some accounts, still does. Last December, Hakim made a high-profile visit to meet President Bush—yet, just weeks later, U.S. forces raided Hakim’s compound in Baghdad and arrested three commanders of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard.

Those who met with Hakim during that visit painted him as supremely confident of his power and clearly unwilling to make the concessions for power sharing with the Sunnis that are the minimal basis for ending Iraq’s civil war. “I was invited to this breakfast with him,” says Judith Yaphe, a former CIA expert on Iraq. “He was extremely smug, extremely arrogant. He was very, very sure of himself. And it was right after he’d met at the White House.”

In fact, the United States has no option—if indeed it wants to end the civil war and begin withdrawing its forces—but to make a deal with Iran, which holds most of the cards. Iran’s influence extends far beyond SCIRI, its closest ally. Dawa, parts of which remain closely allied to Iran, cannot move too far from Tehran, in part because it has no militia of its own. Ayatollah Ali Sistani may not share Iran’s view of the clergy’s role in government, but he’s still part of the old boys’ club that unites the mullahs of Najaf and Qom, and Iran and Sistani have agreed all along on the importance of cementing the Shia hold on power in Iraq.

Ali Allawi, a participant in several of Iraq’s post-Saddam governments, says: “If the Shia are going to retreat from their dominance into a power-sharing role with the Sunnis, they can only do that if they are pressured into it by Iran. The United States has not been able to succeed in that. But the Iranians may.”

The result will be a very different Iraq from the one envisioned by the war’s planners. “One of the ironies of George Bush’s administration is that he has reversed 500 years of Iraqi politics,” says Riedel, the former CIA officer. “Five hundred years ago the Ottoman Turks took Iraq, and they put the Sunnis on top. He’s reversed that, and in the process he has re-created the Persian Safavid Empire, which lost Baghdad to the Ottomans in 1516. I don’t think he had a clue that that’s what he was doing in 2003.” **TAP**

Robert Dreyfuss is a senior correspondent for The American Prospect. He is the author of *Devil’s Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. Research for this article was supported by The Nation Institute Investigative Fund.

The Apprentice

Scooter Libby was a nice liberal boy until he met Paul Wolfowitz—who'd been a nice liberal boy till he met Albert Wohlstetter. A brief history of apocalyptic neoconservatism.

BY ANTHONY DAVID

"The amazing thing is that we are being taken over basically by a cult, eight or nine neo-conservatives."

—Seymour Hersh

IN THE DAYS AFTER PATRICK FITZGERALD READ OUT HIS indictments of perjury and obstruction of justice against I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby a year and a half ago, what drew my attention most was something an old friend of Libby's said about him to a reporter: that the vice-presidential aide's aim in life had always been to remain "so opaque you can't tell he is there." The strategy worked: Despite the central role Libby had in making the case for war in Iraq—the spy novelist John le Carré called the operation Libby ran out of Dick Cheney's office "one of the great public-relations conjuring tricks of history"—in October 2005, no one knew much about him.

More than a year later, I sat in a federal courtroom in Washington, D.C., and watched as Fitzgerald removed layer after layer of the man's opacity. Why, I asked myself throughout the day, would a smart lawyer like Libby perjure himself to Fitzgerald, the most famous public prosecutor in America? And why would he lie to cover up a crime nearly impossible to prove—that of knowingly blowing a CIA agent's cover?

Sitting next to me in court that day was Libby's college girlfriend. I had met her outside the courtroom that morning, standing in line waiting to be admitted. She had asked me to save her place in line and rushed over to Harriet Grant, Libby's wife. The two shook hands, and then hugged.

Once the woman returned, I asked her if she was a friend of Libby's. Yes, she said sadly, she had known him since Yale. "He was such a good person," she continued, in tears. I asked if they had been "involved." She nodded. "It's really painful to see him here," she said in a near whisper. She described the Scooter she had first met during the days of the student rebellion in the 1960s. He was a radical who organized antiwar demonstrations and ran around campus wearing a Malcolm X T-shirt. The two had gone to demonstrations together. "He was such a good person," she repeated. "He still is."

"So what happened to him?"

"The Dark Side," she told me with a sigh, had gotten to him.

When I asked her what dark force had turned the radical-on-the-barricades into the right-hand man of the vice president, she answered, bluntly: Paul Wolfowitz. She recalled the first time Libby fell under the neoconservative's trance, and how he became a sort of apprentice to Wolfowitz. "It was as if he had joined a secret society," the woman explained. When I probed about the "secret" in the society, she wiped her eyes dry with a Kleenex and assured me she had no idea what it was. He never told her.

So, I asked myself, how do you make sense of a man getting drawn to the Dark Side without being dark himself? On the train back to New York that day, I read Libby's roman à clef, *The Apprentice*, a novel that took him 20 years to write. Though its publication had been surrounded mainly by whispers about its pornographic scenes, such as a 10-year-old girl's sex with a bear, what struck me was the apprentice himself. Referred to as "the youth," the hero of the book accidentally comes upon a box filled with his country's secret war plans and becomes the bearer of those secrets.

As the story unfolds, enemies beat the youth black and blue, but he resolutely refuses to divulge what he knows. At book's end, a swashbuckling nationalist embraces the youth as a true patriot. "Arise. You are reborn," he proclaims. Having mastered the dangerous art of discretion, the youth's apprenticeship has come to an end.

Could the "secret" Libby's ex-girlfriend alluded to be so compelling in its power that it turned the Ivy League peacenik into a neocon "patriot"? Could the one thing better than writing fiction be the chance to be a real-world bearer and divulger of state secrets? Had Libby perjured himself, I wondered, to protect a real-world secret war plan?

RUMINATING ON THE QUESTION, IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THE secret might have something to do with the Bush doctrine of preemptive war. The notion that one state could preemptively invade another had been considered unambiguously illegal since the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648. But as I would learn, a bevy of Cold War-era intellectuals had changed that. Libby had learned about the secret doctrine from Wolfowitz, who had received it from Albert Wohlstetter, a RAND Corporation and University

of Chicago mathematician and nuclear strategist. The crooked path that led to the federal courtroom in 2007 began, it seemed, with discoveries made by an obscure mathematician.

Stanley Kubrick was thinking partly of Wohlstetter when he created *Dr. Strangelove*. (His first working title for the film was taken from Wohlstetter's seminal paper, "The Delicate Balance of Terror.") But Wohlstetter was the precise opposite of Kubrick's ex-Nazi: He was a moralist who wanted to preserve liberty, even at the cost of limited nuclear war or ethnic conflict abroad.

Despair at the way the elites were managing the world came easy for a Jewish intellectual of Wohlstetter's generation. He was 20 in 1933, when Hitler took power, and he got his degree in mathematical logic from Columbia University in 1938, the year the Western democracies failed to stand up to Hitler in Munich. At the time, bureaucrats and politicians assumed that the fascist powers were like them: rational players who could

such a tyrannical regime would pose an impossible threat to both American security and the cause of human liberty. In the thermonuclear age, the possibility, however remote, that a tyrant could risk a nuclear strike required that tyranny abroad be contained and eventually defeated.

But the most compelling aspect of Wohlstetter's mixture of apocalyptic and utopian thinking, and the reason he won over a devoted band of talented followers, was his radical moral message of the need for a new band of leaders to battle tyranny using policies that would spread liberal democratic values. The logic behind MAD precluded any attempt to defeat evil. The true liberal, Wohlstetter taught, must not be resigned to the enslavement of half the planet; he must desire, and plan for, the triumph of freedom, if need be through the use of tactical nuclear bombs. And the leaders capable of such a daring expansion of American military power, he firmly believed, were not Establishment men trained in the

old tradition of diplomacy and foreign policy, speaking the obsolete language of détente; they were a new breed of activist intellectuals who would give Western democracies "a new image of ourselves in a world of persistent danger."

THE MOST PROMINENT PERSON who would carry this theory forward to our time turned out to be Paul Wolfowitz, who first met Wohlstetter at a faculty tea hour at the University of Chicago in 1964, by which time Wohlstetter had written his most-important works



Awaiting Rebirth: Scooter Libby, outside U.S. Federal Court in Washington, January 2007.

be dealt with using the established instruments of diplomacy.

From the moment Wohlstetter became an analyst at the RAND Corporation in 1951, he devoted himself to ensuring that Munich would never happen again. "The Delicate Balance of Terror," which he published with the RAND Corporation in 1958, was a groundbreaking tract that took on the heavyweights of American foreign policy. In it, Henry Kissinger, George Kennan, Dean Acheson, and others appear as hapless characters intellectually marooned in a pre-nuclear age.

Wohlstetter singled out the doctrine of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) as proof of the national-security elite's dangerous anachronism. The "realists" believed that nuclear weapons had made war obsolete. Only an "insane adventurer" would launch an attack, and professional diplomats assumed that the totalitarian beast in Moscow would probably behave rationally. But, argued Wohlstetter, the Soviet Union was not necessarily a rational actor: The Russians had lost 20 million people during World War II; there was no reason to assume they wouldn't risk losing many more to become the premier global power.

Wohlstetter argued that scientific progress in the hands of

and had gathered together a group of young followers. Among them was Richard Perle, who had fallen under his spell five years earlier. (Wohlstetter's daughter invited Perle, then in high school, to swim in the family pool; there, Perle met Wohlstetter, who handed him "The Delicate Balance of Terror." Perle, an avid fan of *The Twilight Zone*, was mesmerized by what he would describe as the author's "uncontrollably analytical" mind in matters of life-and-death strategic policy.) Two other disciples, Ahmad Chalabi in the 1960s and Zalmay Khalilzad in the 1970s, joined the ranks of neophytes during graduate work at the University of Chicago.

Wolfowitz was idealistic, ambitious, immensely intelligent, and socially progressive. He was at Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech. He was a member of a family that had been decimated by Hitler's genocidal war against the Jews. And he had no loyalty to the old American political power structures—precisely the kind of brainy idealist Wohlstetter was looking for.

After the Israeli-Arab War, in 1967, just as his young protégé was casting about for a dissertation topic, Wohlstetter added

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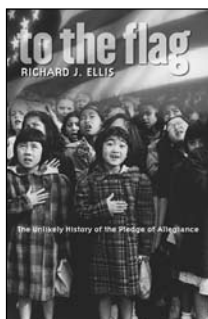
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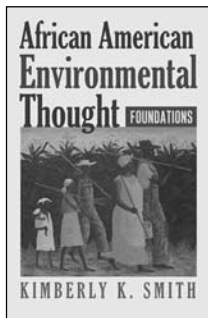
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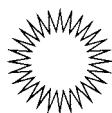
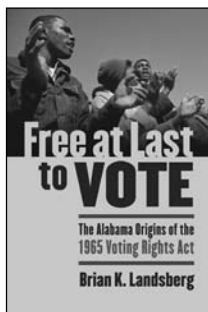
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a new ingredient to his theoretical mix: the danger of nuclear proliferation in dangerously unstable corners of the globe, in particular the Middle East. One key cause for the heightened tension between Egypt and Israel leading up to the Six Day War was the Israeli nuclear facility at Dimona, in the Negev Desert. After the war, the Johnson administration—assuming that the recurrent wars in the region were rational fights over water and land—proposed building three nuclear plants, one each for Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, to desalinate water and bring agriculture to millions of acres of desert. The scheme was called "A Proposal for Our Time."

Wohlstetter saw in the proposal the same old delusions: The bureaucrats were blind to the dangers of nuclear technology and the irrationality of authoritarian regimes. He argued that there would be little to stop these nations from diverting some of the materials from their civilian reactors toward the development of nuclear weapons. Then he traveled to Israel, where he got his hands on a raft of top-secret documents showing how the Egyptians were planning to use the American peace initiative to construct a nuclear device. He returned to the University of Chicago and handed the documents over to Wolfowitz, who used them as the basis for his dissertation.

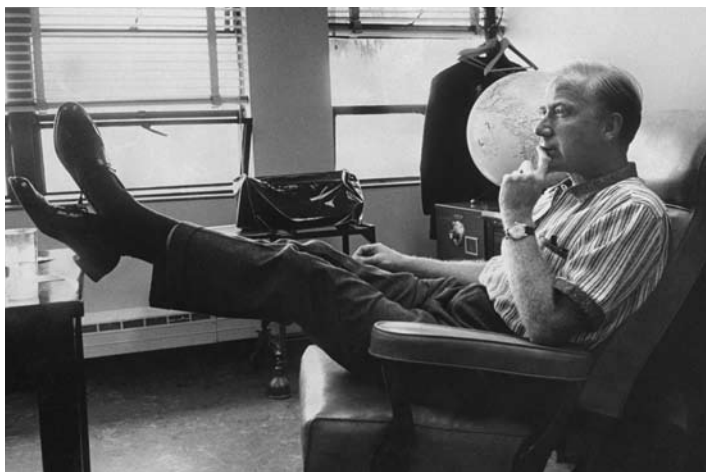
WOLFOWITZ WAS FINISHING UP HIS DISSERTATION ON THE DANGERS of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East when he began teaching at Yale. It was there, in a class he was teaching in 1971, that he first met Libby. Anecdotal evidence from Libby's ex-girlfriend and from his former classmates suggests a sudden and dramatic shift in Libby's thinking starting at this time. But the strength of the relationship with Wolfowitz became much clearer 10 years later.

Perle and Wolfowitz had carried with them the specter of a Middle-Eastern-madman-with-a-nuke as they rose through the ranks of the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. Meanwhile, Libby was a high-priced lawyer in Philadelphia (working away in his spare time on *The Apprentice*). He was also reading William Stevenson's *A Man Called Intrepid*, a sweeping account of how British and American spies devoted their lives—many died—to keep Nazi Germany from developing a nuclear bomb.

Libby had just finished the book when he got a surprise phone call from Wolfowitz. Ronald Reagan was president, and Wolfowitz had landed a plum job as the State Department's head of foreign-policy planning. Perle had become assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, and had hired his friend Douglas Feith to work for him. Wolfowitz asked Libby to be his top aid.

The pair put together a golden team that included two other Wohlstetter devotees, Francis Fukuyama and Zalmay Khalilzad. It was a dedicated and intelligent group, united by a common vision almost transcendental in its force. Together they celebrated the Israeli attack on the French-built nuclear reactor outside of Baghdad, which Perle, over at the Pentagon, had helped plan. Wohlstetter had been issuing warnings about the plant for years, and he was beside himself with joy: Finally, a government was showing the chops needed to thwart evil.

A decade later, Libby left his clearest traces of his mem-



Dr. (Strangelove) and Pupil: Albert Wohlstetter at RAND, 1958 (left); Paul Wolfowitz in Arabia, 1991.

bership in the Wohlstetter society. George Bush Senior was president, and the Soviet Union had collapsed. To a man, the neocons were convinced that the hard-line anti-Soviet policies they had tirelessly promoted were responsible for the victory over the “Evil Empire.” Libby and Wolfowitz were working for then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, who wanted a paper outlining American strategies in the post-Cold War era.

What Libby—with ample help from Wolfowitz, Khalilzad, and Perle, plus some from Wohlstetter—came up with was the Defense Policy Guidance. Written up in 1992, it focused on the danger posed by Middle Eastern dictators with technologically sophisticated and centralized bureaucracies. In the hands of such a state, modern technology could “threaten world order.” As such, the draft concluded, the “United States may be faced with the question whether to take military steps to prevent the development or use of weapons of mass destruction.” This, however, would not be an act of aggression but “a measured military action” that could “contain or preclude a crisis.” One former CIA analyst described Libby’s paramount foreign-policy aim as “never to permit another rival and another threat to America’s dominance so we wouldn’t have to engage in another Cold War.”

The top-secret plan stirred up a torrent of opposition in the Pentagon. The top brass dismissed Wolfowitz and Libby as dangerous civilians, if not lunatics. A high-ranking officer in the military, seeking to expose the plan’s “mad unilateral ambitions,” leaked excerpts to *The New York Times*. Secretary of State James Baker warned President Bush against the “kooks” working for his secretary of defense. Cheney, who had not yet fully wrapped his mind around Wohlstetterian logic, reined in his men.

Libby left government work, made a fortune as Marc Rich’s lawyer, and finally finished his novel. But his Defense Policy Guidance was not forgotten. By 2002, when *The Apprentice* came out in paperback (for which Cheney threw a lavish book party at his home), Wohlstetter’s ideas had morphed into the Bush doctrine, which held that there was a basic irrationality—a “hatred of our liberties”—lurking in the breasts of Middle Eastern dictators. To deter them from using weapons of mass destruction against America or its allies, George W. Bush called for military preemption and a determination to spread “democracy” and “liberty.”

The secret war plans cooked up in Cheney’s office involved turning a distant and highly dubious possibility—that Saddam Hussein would develop and hand over weapons of mass destruction to al-Qaeda—into the kind of imminent national threat detailed in the Bush doctrine. And despite the chaos it unleashed, the war in Iraq was a resounding success in Wohlstetterian terms: The disintegration of the state guaranteed that the technological elite of the country wouldn’t be building dangerous weapons anytime soon.

Indeed, the crumbling of the Iraqi state was the fulfillment of a prophecy fellow neocon David Wurmser—Perle’s protégé and ally at the American Enterprise Institute, the neoconservative think tank that named its conference room after Wohlstetter—had made in 1997: that if Saddam Hussein were driven from power, Iraq would be “ripped apart by the politics of warlords, tribes, clans, sects, and key families,” and out of the “coming chaos in Iraq and most probably in Syria,” the United States and her principal allies, namely Israel and Jordan, could redraw the region’s map.

Then Patrick Fitzgerald showed up. From his first day on the job, he knew that Richard Armitage had been the source of the Valerie Plame leak. But his aggressive investigation left little doubt as to where he was heading: into the inner workings of the vice president’s office. Fitzgerald was on the spoors of a war strategy that had twisted or fabricated information—including fake evidence that Niger had sold uranium to Iraq—to fit a worldview that would justify preemptive action.

So why would Libby, a master of discretion and opacity, “throw sand in the umpire’s eyes,” to use the expression Fitzgerald employed when he read out the perjury indictment in October 2005? Like the apprentice in his novel, Libby may have sacrificed himself to keep the “war plans” secret.

Of course, the author of *The Apprentice* may have also assumed that the end of the story would be very much as in his novel: The swashbuckling President Bush, in the form of a pardon, would decree to the patriotic Libby, “Arise. You are reborn.” **TAP**

Anthony David is co-author, with Sari Nusseibeh, of Once Upon a Country, and is co-author of the forthcoming Lamentations of Youth: The Diaries of Gershom Scholem.

Riyadh Revisions

Administration policy on Saudi Arabia has lurched from an excessive embrace of the regime to an ill-informed democracy campaign. How can the U.S. and the Saudis play a more constructive role?

BY STEVEN SIMON

IN JULY 2002, A RAND CORPORATION RESEARCH ANALYST named Laurent Murawiec gave a briefing on Saudi Arabia to the Defense Policy Board, a blue-ribbon group of former secretaries of defense, chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and an assortment of nongovernmental experts. The meeting was chaired by Richard Perle.

Murawiec was one of the itinerant peddlers of the national-security world, an authority on everything and nothing. He was, however, at one with the zeitgeist. His PowerPoint presentation that day began with the conventional wisdom about the Arab world: Centuries of failure had driven Arabs to the depths of despair and the heights of envy; humiliated, with nothing to show for themselves since the golden age of medieval Islam, they had lashed out against the West.

He then focused on Saudi Arabia: The country's rule, he said, had been usurped by Wahhabists whose mission in life was to draw blood from the West. "Saudi Arabia," Murawiec explained, "is central to the self-destruction of the Arab world and the chief vector of the Arab crisis and its outwardly directed aggression. The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader. Saudi Arabia supports our enemies and attacks our allies; a daily outpouring of virulent hatred against the U.S. from Saudi media, 'educational' institutions, clerics, officials—Saudis tell us one thing in private, [but they] do the contrary in reality."

Nevertheless, Murawiec said, the situation was not entirely hopeless. Although "the role assigned to the House of Saud [by the British] ... has become obsolete—nefarious," the Saudis' position could be taken away. "There is an 'Arabia,'" he assured his audience, "but it need not be 'Saudi.'"

Murawiec's policy prescription, bearing the authoritative seal of the RAND Corporation, was to present the Saudis with an ultimatum:

- "Stop any funding and support for any fundamentalist madrassa, mosque, ulema, [or] predator anywhere in the world;

- Stop all anti-U.S., anti-Israeli, anti-Western predication, writings, etc., within Arabia;

- Dismantle [or] ban all the kingdom's 'Islamic charities'; confiscate its assets; and

- Prosecute or isolate those involved in the terror chain, including in the Saudi intelligence services."

Why would the House of Saud accede to these demands? Because, said Murawiec, "what the House of Saud holds dear can be targeted," and here he listed oil installations, dollar investments, and Islamic holy places. He then capped his proposal to seize Mecca and Medina by dismissing the Saudis as "lazy, overbearing, dishonest, [and] corrupt."

After the briefing leaked, administration officials acknowledged to reporters that it indeed reflected a change of attitude toward the Saudis. According to one official, "People used to rationalize Saudi behavior. You don't hear that anymore. There's no doubt that people are recognizing reality and recognizing that Saudi Arabia is a problem."

The new view of an untrustworthy Saudi Arabia was widely shared by the Bush administration's recruits responsible for Middle East policy, such as Bill Luti, the retired Navy captain who served as the deputy assistant secretary of defense for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs and as the vice president's assistant on Middle East policy. (The joke about Luti was that he concluded every thought with the phrase "Fuck the Saudis.")

The attitude coexisted uneasily with the views of career diplomats. If the discomfort at the State Department was palpable, one can only imagine the consternation in Riyadh, as the realization sunk in that George W. Bush did not march to the beat of the family drum. All told, this was a startling turnabout from the intimate relationship between the House of Saud and the Bush family.

MURAWIEC'S BIZARRE PERFORMANCE WAS IN FACT AN EXTREME expression of festering bipartisan discontent in Washington with Riyadh's behavior as an unreliable ally. In February 1998, the United States sought to punish Saddam Hussein for impeding, then ejecting, United Nations arms inspectors. Large-scale air strikes were planned. At the last minute, or so it seemed to the State Department, the Saudis informed the Clinton administration that the air bases needed to execute the U.S. plan



would not be made available. Regional public opinion about the damage inflicted on Iraqi civilians by UN sanctions, against the background of Israeli-Palestinian violence, had become too hot for the Saudis. The United States was forced to back off its threat to hit Iraq and stand aside as Kofi Annan worked out a face-saving deal with the Iraqi regime. A military divorce between Washington and Riyadh—already under way after the bombing of the U.S. Air Force housing complex in Khobar two years before—gained momentum.

Neoconservatives waiting to take power in Washington had concerns that went beyond the utility of Saudi Arabia as an aircraft carrier. Explaining the Saudis to a Congress naturally suspicious of an ally that didn't share American values and seemed implacably opposed to Israel was difficult at best, and the neocons saw the House of Saud as doomed by the unholy bargain the ruling family was supposed to have struck with a xenophobic Wahhabist clergy. If the family tacked with the prevailing fundamentalist winds, it would grow even more untrustworthy and undependable; if it opposed the clerics, it would be overthrown by the very militants that had been dispatched from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan 10 years before to battle the Soviets. Either

way, America's investment in Saudi Arabia looked like it was going to tank. Given America's dependence on Saudi oil, this was a dangerous situation, to say the least.

Iraq, on the other hand, held real promise. It had nearly as much oil as Saudi Arabia. It was a technocratic state. Culture there had been ruthlessly secularized. Women were doctors and lawyers. The country had fielded a large, mechanized army. Iraq was advanced enough to have come close to weaponizing a nuclear device just before Operation Desert Storm. The regime was horrible, but Iraqi foreign policy had long been geared toward containing Iranian revolutionary power, a goal shared by Washington. With its oil and Arab nationalist credentials, a grateful Iraq—especially compared with a fragile, obscurantist regime like Saudi Arabia's—could be the ideal platform for the projection of American power in the Middle East. All it needed was regime change.

The neocon view of the Saudis seemed confirmed by September 11. The evil seeds planted by the ruling family's support for the Wahhabist movement and its overseas missionary work had born bitter fruit. Hundreds of Saudis fought against the United States in Afghanistan; more

than 130 wound up at Guantánamo Bay. The Saudi government seemed unable to cope with post-9-11 pressure to cut off the flow of private money to jihadist causes and help Washington get to the bottom of the conspiracy. The outbreak, in 2003, of the so-called Saudi intifada, in which homegrown militants launched dramatic attacks on foreign installations in Saudi Arabia and on the interior ministry, further validated the fin de siècle mood of the moment.

As these dramatic developments unfolded, Washington escalated its warnings that only political liberalization could sustain America's friendship and royal-family rule. The powerful example of Iraq reinforced these tocsins, as did the administration's public commitment to democratization. In Cairo in 2005, in a weird echo of an oft-heard Arab conspiracy theory, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice declared, "For 60 years, my country pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region ... and we achieved neither. Now we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people."

There were, in fact, serious problems in the kingdom: a growing population, lower incomes, a flawed educational system, and high unemployment—all of which were nourishing

an existing radical religious streak. Pressure on the House of Saud to distance itself from the United States came not from the establishment clergy but from the “Awakening Sheikhs,” popular fundamentalist firebrands. The initially ineffectual government response to the crisis of the 2003–04 countrywide insurgency justified the jittery reaction of outsiders, especially Americans. And there was no escaping the fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers on 9-11 had been Saudi.

But in both Riyadh and Washington, domestic reform soon took a backseat to containing terrorism. And the kingdom ultimately put down its homegrown insurgency. Like the prospect of a hanging, the violence of those years concentrated the minds of the ruling family. Desultory policing took on a new seriousness and efficiency. Perhaps as important as the vigorous policing, the government competed for the hearts and minds of a Saudi silent majority, through the shrewd use of images of carnage and the statements of a compliant official clergy.

FIVE YEARS AFTER MURAWIEC’S BRIEFING, THE ANTIPATHY of the Bush administration toward the Saudis has clearly been reciprocated. King Abdullah, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia since 1995 (but officially the king only since 2005), has increasingly distanced Riyadh from Washington. The Bush administration’s public pressure for liberalization, its botched Iraq War, its neglect of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, and a resurgent Iran have made this inevitable.

In August 2001, Abdullah, then the Saudi crown prince, threatened privately to reassess the Saudi–U.S. relationship if the Bush administration took no action to reduce the carnage of the Palestinian intifada, then in its second year. A year later, in his first visit to Crawford, Texas, Abdullah showed President Bush a 10-minute video of Israeli violence against Palestinians, as well as photos of dead and wounded Palestinian children. Later, in 2006–07, as king, he publicly rebuked the Bush administration for doing too little to rein in Israelis or improve the lot of Palestinians.

Bush’s Iraq policy worsened relations. In February 2003, the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, warned the president that if the United States invaded Iraq, it would be “solving one problem and creating five more.” More recently, an aide to Abdullah wrote in *The Washington Post* that Saudi Arabia would have to intervene in Iraq to protect Sunni lives if the United States was going to abandon its responsibilities. And in late March, in a high-profile speech to Arab heads of state, the king infuriated Bush officials by labeling the U.S. presence in Iraq an “illegitimate foreign occupation.” In yet another blow to the United States, he has also refused to meet with the U.S.–backed Iraqi prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, which will further erode the legitimacy of Maliki’s government. According to a former Bush administration ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Abdullah has said that he is unwilling to be known as President Bush’s “Arab Tony Blair.”

The Saudis have blamed U.S. mismanagement in Iraq for what they see as an Iranian, and thus, Shia ascendancy. Worried about Iranian inroads into their left flank—Palestine—the

Saudis brokered a deal between Hamas and Fatah in March. The bargain undercut a simultaneous U.S. effort to get Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert back to the table with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, while keeping up the pressure on Hamas to recognize Israel and renounce violence. The Saudis, who believe that isolating Hamas is counterproductive, simply blew past Washington’s priorities. Riyadh’s reentry into the peace process—by reviving its 2002 proposal for resolving the Israeli-Arab impasse—was also spurred by frustration with Washington’s dithering.

Even as the Saudis’ disgust was rising, the Bush administration’s view of the kingdom was softening, partly due to personnel changes at the Defense Department and a weaker vice president, and partly as awareness of the troubles in Iraq began to sink in. The United States was going to need Saudi Arabia not only in Iraq but also to help counter the resulting empowerment of Iran.

Although the administration had already noted Iran’s assertiveness, the Hezbollah-Israeli summer war of 2006 heightened its perception of Iran’s reach and ambition. For the White House, the war was part of a larger pattern of aggression, featuring the defiant pursuit of nuclear weapons and dangerously provocative rhetoric about the Holocaust and Israel’s legitimacy.

In the new dispensation, the administration took another look at old-fashioned balance of power politics. As a large, wealthy Arab country threatened by Iran, Saudi Arabia could be the linchpin of a Sunni counterweight to Iran, consisting of Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, and tacitly allied to Israel.

New opportunities for joint action did arise, with Lebanon as a key venue. The U.S. government reportedly began covertly funding the moderate, anti-Hezbollah government of Fuad Siniora in a coordinated effort with the Saudi government, whose ample resources and excellent connections might be used to hem in Hezbollah more directly. This approach seems to have had a useful impact on Hezbollah’s readiness to deal in a more pragmatic way with the Siniora government. Saudi support for the UN investigation of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri’s murder two years ago serves American interests vis à vis Syria. And it appears that long-standing but discrete Saudi contacts with Israel have slightly increased and improved.

HAVING SAUDI ARABIA AS A PARTICIPANT IN A REALIGNMENT between the region’s extremists and moderates, as the Bush administration now dichotomizes regional states, is certainly preferable to demonizing the House of Saud. But the kingdom’s own internal divisions and increasing independence from Washington could make the Saudis a weak reed. The political liberalization sought by the Bush administration and heralded by King Abdullah has stalled. Long-promised municipal elections were held, but the winners who have emerged have meager authority. The national dialogue that had begun in 2003—which brought together women, Shiites, Sufis, and followers of non-Hanbali legal schools—continues but is more fizzle than sizzle.

The problem is not that there’s no constituency for reform; it’s that there’s little agreement on what “reform” means. To

According to a former Bush administration ambassador to Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah has said that he is unwilling to be known as President Bush's "Arab Tony Blair."

some, it means a greater reliance on the clergy, safeguarding a traditional curriculum, and staving off concessions to women's rights. For these reformers, elections have seemed like a good thing: They thought they'd do well—and they have. For liberal reformers, though, elections haven't appeared to be unambiguously good for exactly that reason. Apart from the continued subordination of women, which reformers tend to support, the fractured reform movement shares only an interest in greater accountability and transparency on the part of the House of Saud. This would necessarily clip the wings of the ruling family. The family, however, has no intention of giving up its power.

The royal family does understand that some accommodation is probably necessary if it is to retain control. To the degree that there are fissures within the family, which some personify as a feud between the irascible Wahhabist Prince Nayef and the comparatively pragmatic King Abdullah, the differences are over the size, speed, and nature of concessions necessary to preserve the family's position. Nayef's off-the-wall suggestions that the Jews and the Muslim Brotherhood conspired to destroy the World Trade Center reinforced his image as a retrograde, quasi-bin Ladenite. But as the man on whose watch 15 Saudis plotted, undetected, to participate in what became the 9-11 attacks, he needed whatever talking points were available for domestic consumption. The initial success of the jihadist uprising of 2003 further tarnished his credentials. Yet Nayef is as determined as any other member of the family to thwart any threat to its authority. The April roundup of 172 jihadists is an indication of his seriousness—just as it indicates the seriousness of blowback from Iraq.

For the moment, this internal debate over reform has probably receded. It always does when oil revenues are burgeoning and the ruling family can raid the kingdom's coffers to buy off dissent. If there truly were cracks in family unity over make-or-break issues, they would be apparent in the public behavior of key princes. In the 1950s and '60s, when such tensions prevailed between Saud and Faisal, the losers spent time out of the country. The same was true in the 1970s, when a split over how the kingdom should respond to the peace deal between Israel and Egypt drove then-Crown Prince Fahd abroad. Nothing like this is happening now.

In the meantime, though, recent succession reforms have institutionalized arrangements for the passing of the torch whenever Abdullah passes from the scene. Among the implications of the new rules is that the 74-year-old Prince Nayef, even if he were to live that long, would not make it to the throne. Instead, the crown would likely to pass from the current prince, the 77-year-old Sultan, to a younger generation. Prince Muhammad bin Fahd, governor of the eastern province where the country's oil and Shia are located, or Khalid bin Sultan, son of the defense minister, are two plausible possibilities;

either would be a responsible, relatively pro-Western choice.

Despite the sluggish pace of the reform process, and given the toxic jihadist propaganda permeating the region, there is little chance that the existing order will be swept away. Members of the middle class, even those now in their 20s and 30s, reject violent change. The clerics that had endorsed violence, the so-called "instigating sheikhs," who explicitly endorsed violence recanted in 2003. And recent research shows that the "Iraq" generation of Saudi jihadists is more likely to frame its complaint as one against Christians and Jews, rather than its allegedly apostate rulers.

None of this signifies that Washington should take pressure off the Riyadh on counterterrorism, especially the control of unlicensed funds that support jihadist groups. Saudi Arabia has come a long way from the pre-9-11 breeding ground of the global jihad. The Saudis still need to ratchet back their funding of mosques and religious schools outside the kingdom.

Domestic political reform is secondary. The United States should be under no illusion that the Saudi ruling family will go much beyond existing concessions, especially in areas that concern Washington, like education and women's rights. If educational reform could be sold as the key to job opportunities and not immunity to religious radicalism, it might be more feasible. Gender equality, however, will remain the third rail of Saudi politics.

Diplomatically, there are opportunities for a constructive Saudi role. The United States will continue to need Saudi cooperation in Lebanon. Revival of Riyadh's 2002 peace initiative could prove valuable, too. On the other hand, the Saudis are not in a position to be helpful in the ongoing quest to block Iran's pursuit of a nuclear fuel cycle. In Iraq, Saudi funding for large infrastructure projects could put Iraqis to work. But Riyadh is limited in its ability to forge a consensus among Sunni insurgents that might lead to the isolation of al-Qaeda and negotiations with the U.S. and Iraqi governments.

With the loss of fevered neocon dreams of taking the "Saudi" out of "Arabia," and the return to realpolitik, the U.S.-Saudi relationship is a bit closer to where it should be. It is not, nor will it ever be, a "special relationship" grounded in shared values or common experience. Serious policy differences, especially over Israel and Iraq, are likely to persist. Political liberalization will remain important, though perhaps not decisive, when it comes to the longevity of House of Saud's authority. As neoconservative rigidity has begun to give way to neorealism, a strong relationship with the kingdom is in America's interest. And as Lord Palmerston said: "Nations have no permanent friends or allies; they only have permanent interests." **TAP**

Steven Simon is Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The Iran Puzzle

The Islamic Republic is the most troublesome Mideast state, but has signaled its desire to deal with us. How should America respond to Iran?

BY RAY TAKEYH

FOR NEARLY THREE DECADES, THE ENMITY BETWEEN THE United States and Iran has been an established fact of Middle East politics. At various times, both countries have attempted to transcend their animosity and arrive at mutually acceptable compacts. However, there was never any urgency in either Washington or Tehran for a bold movement forward. In a peculiar sense, the domestic politics in both countries made continuation of their managed hostilities an acceptable alternative to the precarious task of revising relations.

Today, the altered political landscape of the Middle East and Iran's accelerating nuclear program make such caution irresponsible if not reckless. The reality is that the civil wars in Iraq and Lebanon cannot be resolved, and the stability of the Persian Gulf cannot be ensured, without Iran's constructive participation.

Yet the Islamic Republic of Iran—with its penchant for terrorism and its determination to acquire an advanced nuclear capability and play an increasingly assertive regional role—still confounds the United States. In official Washington, the essential objectives and interests of Tehran remain a mystery. Is Iran still a revolutionary state or just another medium-sized power seeking to project its influence in its immediate neighborhood? Are the growling mullahs determined to impose their theocratic template on an unwilling Middle East, or can there be an accommodation between the United States and Iran?

Contrary to the presumptions of the right-wing press and the Bush White House, the Islamic Republic is a unique political system. Iran differs dramatically from its Arab neighbors: Its institutions, elections, and political factions are relevant and wield considerable influence over the government's course of action. Debates rage within the parliament and the bureaucracy, in the seminaries and the street, among media outlets and academics. Far from being a stagnant totalitarian state, Iran is home to a competitive political culture whose personalities routinely jockey for influence and power. The Islamic Republic is a place where the president does not dominate the decision-making process, the legislature does not yield to the executive, unelected clerics impose checks on the polity, and the public is not excluded from the deliberations of the state.

Deriding its elections and caricaturing its politicians may be easy, but outside of Israel and Turkey, Iran is the only place in the Middle East where politics matters.

Similarly, America's characterization of Iran as a militant state determined to subvert its neighbors and export its revolution is also exaggerated and flawed. Throughout the tenure of the Islamic Republic, there have been periods when ideology displaced moderation, when national interests have been sacrificed at the altar of Islamic radicalism. The 1980s represent the high point of revolutionary activism, when war with Iraq and conflict with the United States were the pillars of Iran's international relations. The founder of the world's first modern theocracy, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, did not see himself as simply the head of a state but as the leader of an entire community of believers. His was to be a "revolution without borders," seeking to emancipate Islam's realm from the transgressions of American imperialism and Israeli Zionism. Such ideas managed only to produce a prolonged and devastating war, international ostracism, and a self-defeating isolation. In a sense, Iran's revolutionary idealism died in the same place America's grandiose pretensions faded away: on the battlefields of Iraq.

Khomeini's more subdued successors gradually came to appreciate the failure of his mission and the costs it imposed on their beleaguered nation. In the 1990s, a fundamental shift occurred in Iran's international orientation, enshrining national-interest calculations as the defining factor in the country's approach to the world. By cultivating favorable relations with key global powers such as Russia and China, and normalizing ties with regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran sought to project its influence through a more subtle manner.

However, the Islamic Republic has yet to follow the typical trajectory of a once-revolutionary state: the complete relinquishing of its radical patrimony for more mundane considerations. To the contrary, Iran continues to stridently oppose the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and to support a struggle against Israel that expresses itself through terrorism.

The rise of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, his fiery rhetoric, and his disgraceful denials of Holocaust have led to the perception that Iran is a messianic state seeking to deliberately provoke conflict in order to realize scriptural predictions.

Yet Iran is no longer committed to refashioning regional norms in its image. Ahmadinejad's incendiary pronouncements notwithstanding, Iran's rulers have finally confined their Islamist imagination within their borders. The transformations that the nation has undergone in the decades since Khomeini, its competing centers of influence, and the power of the elders of the revolution (such as the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) all impose serious checks on Ahmadinejad's designs. Iran's reactionary president may share Khomeini's strident ideological imperatives, but he has neither the power nor the authority to impose such a vision on his country.

Today, the theocratic regime's struggle to define a coherent foreign policy is taking shape not just in a changing Iran but in a changed Middle East. Four years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Iran has emerged as the principal, if not the only, beneficiary of the Bush administration's hubris and misjudgments.



Atomic Ahmadinejad? Iran's president at a uranium enrichment plant, April 2007.

The displacement of Saddam Hussein's regime and the ascendance of Shia parties in Iraq have paved the way for Iran's hegemonic claims. After decades of having its national aspirations thwarted by Western empires and Sunni states, Iran is poised to emerge as the preeminent power in the Persian Gulf.

The debates now engulfing the theocratic state reflect this altered status: The guardians of the theocracy no longer fear prospects of "regime change" orchestrated from Washington, or even military retribution for their nuclear defiance. The questions preoccupying Tehran are how it should consolidate its sphere of influence and whether it can emerge as regional hegemon in defiance of or accommodation with the United States.

Beyond the glare of political posturing and hostile rhetoric, the opportunities and challenges presented by the U.S. invasion of Iraq have forced Iran to make momentous decisions. For the first time since the shah fell, the regime has accepted the necessity of a more rational relationship with the United States. In August 2006, in its official response to the U.S.-European package deal, Iran issued one of its most important, if underreported, declarations. In a document that enjoys the approbation of Khamenei and all the factions and personalities within the regime, Tehran stressed its readiness for "long-term cooperation in security, economic and political and energy

areas in order to achieve sustainable security in the region." In a pointed reference to Washington, the document stressed that "to resolve the issues at hand in a sustainable manner, there would be no alternative except to recognize and remove the underlying roots and causes that have led the two sides to the current complicated positions."

After decades of demonizing Washington, Tehran finally conceded that a less-contentious relationship with the United States is the most suitable manner of securing its national aspirations.

HOW, THEN, SHOULD THE UNITED STATES APPROACH AN ENDURING foe that suddenly displays signs of flexibility?

The White House routinely proclaims, of course, that all options are on the table, a reminder to Tehran of U.S. military power. Such gestures of bellicosity would be more convincing if the United States had not lost the war in Iraq and were not desperately searching for a graceful exit out of its Arab predicament. Moreover, successful U.S. air strikes on Iran would depend on almost perfect intelligence—a threat that Tehran, given the recent record of U.S. intelligence services in the Middle East, cannot take seriously. As with any determined proliferator, moreover, Iran has duplicated, concealed, and dispersed its nuclear program to ensure that it survives a concerted military attack.

Of late, however, the belligerent White House rhetoric conceals a subtle shift in Washington's perspective, with diplomacy largely displacing force as the preferred means of resolving disputes. The September 11 tragedies initially jolted the Bush administration as it sought to revise, if not discard, the traditional American reliance on diplomacy and deterrence to deal with threats. The character of adversarial regimes—as opposed to their actual conduct—would determine the degree of American antagonism. Under this framework, despotic regimes would inevitably seek and use weapons of mass destruction, promote terrorism, menace their neighbors, and plot against American interests. Iran was a threat not only because of its nuclear ambitions but also because it oppressed its citizens. Such a recalcitrant regime could be neither contained nor deterred, leaving regime change as the only viable option.

Then came the U.S. defeat in Iraq and the ascendance of more measured and pragmatic officials in both the State and Defense departments. As the discredited cohort of neoconservatives gradually migrated back to the American Enterprise Institute, a hesitant administration was left with a new set of challenges. Suddenly, during the second Bush administration, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and newly arrived Defense Secretary Robert Gates began talking the language of multilateralism and proclaiming the necessity of diplomacy. The hawks in the vice president's office may still cherish the dreams of military retribution against the recalcitrant mullahs, but Rice has pointedly called for "a change in regime behavior"—not a change in the regime itself. In a dramatic swing of the pendulum, America today seems willing to negotiate with Iran on all relevant issues.

However, the acrimony of the past few years cannot be resolved by a mere declaration that the United States is ready to meet with Iran. The administration has not undertaken the necessary

Iran's reactionary president may share Khomeini's strident ideological imperatives, but he has neither the power nor the authority to impose such a vision on his country.

confidence-building measures that must precede a dialogue with Tehran—such as the unilateral actions to demonstrate seriousness of purpose undertaken by the Nixon administration prior to embarking on its secret diplomatic outreach to Beijing. As part of a similar campaign, the United States must be prepared to end its provocative naval maneuvers off Iran's coast, shelve its policy of pressuring Europeans to disinvest from Iran, and put an end to its hopeless democracy-promotion plan that provides \$75 million to discredited exiles.

Today, normalization of relations as a means of regulating Iranian power is not the most viable option; it is the only realistic one. The United States is not inexperienced in dealing with assertive regional states; its handling of China offers some useful lessons. Given the power and influence of such ancient and self-confident civilizations, the notions of isolation and containment have limited utility. However, through the adroit use of diplomatic relations, economic engagement, and strategic dialogue, Washington may be able to create an environment in which Iran would see it in its interest to adhere to higher standards of behavior. In essence, a new situation would be created whereby instead of America coercing Iran into compliance, the Islamic Republic would *want* to be contained.

What's needed now are negotiations on how to proceed with normalizing diplomatic and economic relations. As part of such a dialogue, an entire range of U.S.–Iranian disputes can be considered. From the American perspective, Iran's nuclear infractions, its support for terrorism, and its behavior in Iraq would be the most salient issues. The Iranian regime has its own set of grievances over economic sanctions and attempts to marginalize its regional influence.

On the nuclear issue, however, the Libya option of complete dismantlement of the apparatus is unrealistic. Yet through a rigorous verification process involving the permanent presence of inspectors and snap examination of facilities without notice, the international community could be assured that Iran's nuclear technologies are not being misused for military purposes. At a time when Iran's nuclear program is increasingly enmeshed in the country's sense of national identity, the task at hand is to devise a plan whereby Tehran can have access to nuclear material without presenting a proliferation concern.

Secondly, the stability and success of the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad is in the interest of both Iran and the United States, and should provide them with ample incentive for tempering Iraq's sectarian conflict. Unlike the Sunni regimes, Iran's leaders appreciate that their objectives next door can best be achieved through the unfolding democratic process that is bound to empower the Shia majority, rather than through violence and insurgency. In a more cooperative framework, Iran can assist the United States in reconstruction of Iraq and rein in unruly Shia militias and politicians such as Muqtada al-Sadr.

One of the thorniest issues would be to divest Iran from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its attachment to Hezbollah. Iran's commitment to militant groups opposing Israel may seem immutable. However, Iran has never been provided with an opportunity to mend ties with the United States. That possibility may just offer Iran important incentives to temper its pernicious behavior toward Israel—behavior that has never served its core national interests anyway.

In the end, the best manner of extracting Iran from the Arab-Israeli arena is for the United States and the key Arab states to launch a concerted diplomatic effort to resolve the remaining differences between Israel and both its Palestinian and Syrian neighbors. Should there be an accord that satisfies Israel's security imperatives, Palestinian nationalist mandates, and Syria's territorial desires, Iran would have no choice but to divest itself from its radical brethren. A peace treaty negotiated by the United States, embraced by the Palestinians, and buttressed by a regional consensus would finally press Iran to terminate its self-defeating belligerence toward the Jewish state. If Iran's opposition to Israel and its penchant for terrorism become moot issues, then normalization has a better prospect of success in both Tehran and Washington.

As part of the new paradigm, the United States would have to alter both the style and substance of its policy. A changed U.S. policy must begin with an official acceptance of the authority of the Islamic Revolution. The United States must be prepared to ease its economic sanctions, which have undoubtedly imposed a cost on Iran. This would provide Iran access to the lucrative American market and also make it a more attractive place for international investors concerned about financing projects in a country in America's crosshairs.

The normalization of relations between the two states need not come at the cost of abandoning American idealism, however. As in the Helsinki Accords, U.S. recognition of Iran's legitimacy should entail a pledge from Tehran to observe international standards of human rights. Incorporating human-rights demands in the larger package of normalization would do much more to push Iran toward political tolerance than lofty speeches from Washington coupled with aid to hopeless exiles.

In the midst of the chaos of the Middle East, Iran's recalcitrant theocracy has finally appreciated the need for a more rational relationship with the United States. The question now is whether Washington is ready to reciprocate and take an important step toward ending one of its longest feuds and stabilizing one of the world's most volatile regions. **TAP**

Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*.

Europe and the Middle East

While Bush has done nothing to solve the Israeli-Palestinian impasse, Europe has stood idly by. It's time for the continent to assert itself.

BY CHRIS PATTEN

IT IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE AN equitable and lasting settlement in the Middle East without the balanced and sustained involvement and leadership of the United States. As the only superpower in a world of increasingly influential lesser powers, the United States matters everywhere. No one else does. Donald Rumsfeld might have called this reality a “known known.”

But other countries or groups of countries also matter hugely, in some regions and over some issues: China on North Korea; India and China on future environmental hazards; Europe on the Middle East.

Europe matters here for four reasons. First, geographical proximity: The Middle East is our backyard, or maybe our front porch. Second, historical and cultural links. Third, commercial contacts: We're working to create a free-trade area around the Mediterranean supported by a large development budget and soft loans. Fourth, backing: Any settlement is going to require our financial and political support.

So how does Europe manifest its engagement? Mainly through a lot of anguished, but largely ineffective, political involvement. Ministers and officials come and go. There are hand-wringing discussions and communiqués. And sometimes those of us in the field say something a little risky—something that has not been cleared by America's National Security Council (NSC) or by Israel's foreign ministry.

We were early supporters of the Palestinian state. We pay for peace initiatives. We expressed concern about the Wall—I've seen it and wondered to myself, ‘When is a wall not a wall?’ We believe that any change to the 1967 borders in a final settlement should be by agreement. We funded the Palestinian Authority with support closely watched over by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, in the days after so much support had been channelled (no questions asked) through the Arafat bank account.

We don't go much beyond these steps. We are reluctant—most of us—to say anything that distances us from the United States. But there is a world of difference between accepting that the United States is the prime mover in the region and asserting that nothing should be said or done that opens up even a tissue-wide gap between the trans-Atlantic partners. It is no surprise



that Tony Blair takes this view; he appears to want to outsource British foreign policy to the NSC. It is more of a surprise when others go along with it.

A prime example of this approach occurred over the so-called Road Map for Peace in the Middle East, originally intended to chart a route to a peaceful settlement. The Road Map, despite some mind-boggling rewriting of history by the Bush administration, was a European initiative: It was largely written by the Danish government when Denmark had the presidency of the European Union. Its original insight was that we should not try to creep up on peace by sequential steps (“After you, Yasir”; “No, after you, Ariel”).

Instead of waiting on each side to deem that the other had done something sufficient to merit a positive response, we advocated parallelism: The two sides should move forward at the same time, meeting a series of rendezvous, with deadlines. The machinery to oversee and promote this diplomatic journey

was to be the “Quartet” of America, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union.

We should have smelled trouble the first time we went to Washington to talk about the plan. The State Department wanted some changes—fair enough. But the mood elsewhere was more unsettling. We arrived in Washington within days of Elliot Abrams’ appointment as President Bush’s principal adviser on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Moreover, when we went to the White House, the president, with his implacably grim vice president seated beside him, told us how much he favored “a” road map. Was this some curious and inadvertent grammatical slip? We soon found out.

To his credit, the president spoke up for a Palestinian state, but then seemed to endorse the “facts on the ground”—the sort of settlement activity on the West Bank that would make peace increasingly unlikely. The road map moved from the passenger seat to the glove compartment to the trunk of the car, and eventually we seemed to forget all about it.

As for the Quartet, that became a forum for hearing what the United States was proposing to do. Or, more usually, *not* do. The Quartet was called, with a calculated sense of derision, “the Quartet *sans trios*” by Amr Moussa, the secretary-general of the Arab League. If you lash yourself to a vacuum, then a vacuum is what your own policy amounts to. Mostly, European policy has been to have another meeting of the Quartet, with family photos and communiqués. Better, perhaps, to save on the air travel and worry about the carbon footprint.

So what should happen?

Europe should speak up for engagement—but of what sort? First, we should make it clear that we will deal with the Palestinian national unity government and provide funds again for its finance ministry in the trusted and capable hands of Saleem Fayyad. The only provisos should be that the Palestinian government has to move to prevent rocket attacks against Israel, has to work for the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit, and has to commit itself to President Mahmoud Abbas as the principal Palestinian negotiator, with any settlement by him being accepted if it is agreed to in a referendum or through a similar democratic process.

Second, we should press for direct peace talks between Israel and Syria. The United States cannot have a policy in the Middle East if it refuses to talk to some of the principal actors in the bloody drama. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi deserves a pat on the back for recognizing that.

Third, Europe should speak out more clearly against further settlement activity on the West Bank. Planned settlements east of Jerusalem would simply make it impossible to construct a viable Palestinian state.

Fourth, European leaders should call for a conference involving Israel, Palestine, the Quartet members, and senior Arab

While the road to a peace in Jerusalem did not lead through Baghdad, the road to a more peaceful Middle East demands a peaceful settlement between Palestine and Israel.

League representatives to attempt to put a final agreement on a fast track. Europe should welcome what the Arab League has begun to do in the region and beyond—to set out the (repeated) terms of its Beirut declaration, which offers full recognition of Israel in return for an agreement on borders and refugees—and we should press for more publicity for this initiative by Arab states in Israel itself.

Fifth, the European Union should not go weak at the knees whenever Washington takes a step that is ill-judged or dangerous. The way the United States egged on Israel to bomb Hezbollah in Lebanon—the “birth pangs” of a new Middle East, as I recall—was a vast mistake, not least for Israel. If that was a way of demonstrating friendship for Israel, then heaven help this brave, democratic, and pluralistic country.

Perhaps the best way Europe can help bring peace to the Middle East is simply by raising the political price of doing nothing—or worse still, of pursuing policies that encourage some Israeli politicians to think they have Washington’s implicit permission to veto anything that might bring a fair peace nearer.

It’s not as though the Bush years have produced any progress—except perhaps the progress of despair that comes with weariness at continued killing, with more deaths in the Middle East since 2001 than in the eight years of the previous presidency.

Those who want peace cannot kid themselves that all will necessarily be different with a change of policy after a Democratic presidential victory in 2008. Senator Clinton hardly inspires confidence on this issue, and Senator Obama had to run for cover after observing what any visitor can see with his or her own eyes: that the Palestinians do suffer terribly today—as, of course, do too many Israelis.

Present policies lead nowhere except to more deaths and to the destruction of more hope. Should Europe continue to think its role is to whistle past the graveyard, hoping for better news while secretly fearing the worst? It may not be popular to say it, but while the road to a peace in Jerusalem did not lead through Baghdad, the road to a more peaceful Middle East certainly demands—early in the journey, at least—a peaceful settlement between Palestine and Israel.

I want to see a prosperous and democratic Israel, reflecting values that most of us share on either side of the Atlantic, living at peace with its neighbors—the sort of peace that the Geneva Initiative would have brought. That is not an anti-Israeli statement, or a pro-Arab one. It is a pro-peace argument, with an outcome that the United States and Europe should recognize is hugely in their own interest.

What, after all, is the alternative? **TAP**

Chris Patten is a former European commissioner for external relations.

Guns on the Brain

When it comes to gun controls, Democrats fall silent. As with many hot-button social issues, they can't figure out how to reach people's emotions. Here's how they can regain their moral compass—and their power of speech.

BY DREW WESTEN

Adapted from the forthcoming book, THE POLITICAL BRAIN

ON APRIL 16, SEUNG-HUI CHO, A SENIOR AT Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia, carried two semiautomatic pistols onto campus and killed 32 people. It was the deadliest shooting in modern American history.

The following week, a nation listened in horror as witnesses recounted stories of how they had barricaded desks against their classroom doors to keep the psychotic young man from entering, only to hear him spend a round of ammo, drop the spent clip, and reload in seconds.

Democratic leaders offered the requisite condolences. But that's all they offered. They didn't mention that the Republican Congress had let the Brady Act, which banned the sale of semiautomatic weapons, sunset in 2004. They didn't mention that in the decade or so after the passage of that act, 100,000 felons lost their right to bear arms, but not a single hunter lost that right. Instead, the Democrats ran for political cover, waiting for the smoke to clear.

This wasn't the first time Democrats scattered when threatened with Republican gunshots. They were silent as the Beltway sniper terrorized our nation's capital a month before the midterm elections of 2002. And they have been silent or defensive on virtually every "wedge" issue that has divided our nation for much of the last 30 years. When the Republicans tried to play the hate card again in 2006, this time under the cover of immigration reform, Democrats scrambled to pull together a "policy" on immigration, instead of simply asking, "What's the matter, gays aren't working for you anymore?"

So how did we find ourselves where we are today, with an electorate that has finally figured out that the once larger-than-life Wizard of Terror was nothing but a projection on a screen—and an opposition party that can't seem to find its heart, its brain, or its courage, and instead wonders what's the matter with Kansas?

And most importantly, how do we find our way back home?

VISIONS OF MIND

Behind every campaign lies a vision of mind—often implicit, rarely articulated, and generally invisible to the naked eye.

Traces of that vision can be seen in everything a campaign does or doesn't do.

The vision of mind that has captured the imagination of Democratic strategists for much of the last 40 years—a *dispassionate mind* that makes decisions by weighing the evidence and reasoning to the most valid conclusions—bears no relation to how the mind and brain actually work. When strategists start from this vision of mind, their candidates typically lose.

Democrats typically bombard voters with laundry lists of issues, facts, figures, and policy positions, while Republicans offer emotionally compelling appeals, whether to voters' values, principles, or prejudices. As a result, we have seen only one Democrat elected and reelected to the White House since Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Bill Clinton, who, like Roosevelt, understood how to connect with voters emotionally) and only one Republican fail to do so (George Bush Senior, who ran like a Democrat and paid for it).

Our brains are nothing but vast networks of neurons. Of particular importance for understanding politics are "networks of associations"—bundles of thoughts, feelings, sounds, images, memories, and emotions that have become linked through experience. People can't tell you much about what's in those networks, or about what's likely to change them (which happen to be the central determinants of voting behavior). They can't tell you because they don't have conscious access to them, any more than they can tell you what's going on in their pancreas. And if you ask them, they often get it wrong.

In polls and focus groups, voters told John Kerry's consultants that they didn't like "negativity," so the consultants told Kerry to avoid it. To what extent those voters just didn't know the power of negative appeals on their own networks, or didn't want to admit it, is unclear. What is clear is that George W. Bush won the election by spending 75 percent of his budget on negativity against a candidate whose refusal to fight back projected nothing but weakness in the face of aggression—precisely the narrative Bush was constructing about Kerry.

If you start with the assumption of a dispassionate mind—of voters who weigh the utility of each candidate's stand on a range of issues and calculate which candidate has the greater utility—

you inevitably turn to pollsters as oracles to divine which issues are up, which are down, and which are best avoided. The vision of the dispassionate mind represents public opinion in one dimension—a straight line, from up to down, high to low, pro-choice to anti-abortion, anti-gun to pro-gun.

But this is a one-dimensional rendering of three-dimensional data. If you start with networks, you think very differently about campaigns, from the way you interpret polling data to the way you handle the wedge issues that have run Democratic campaigns into the ground for decades. On virtually every contentious political issue—abortion, welfare, gay marriage, tax cuts, and, yes, guns—polls show a seemingly “mixed” pattern of results, with the electorate endorsing what seem like contradictory positions. The vast majority of Americans support gun regulations but also support the right to bear arms. So are Americans pro-gun or anti-gun?

That’s the wrong question. And it inevitably leads Democratic strategists to the wrong answer: “Take the issue off the table—it’s radioactive.”

This kind of one-dimensional thinking fails to appreciate that voters may be of two minds about an issue. The same issue often activates two or more networks that lead to different feelings in the same person (e.g., concern about guns in the hands of criminals, and support for the rights of law-abiding citizens to protect their families), and different groups of voters may have radically different associations to the same thing (whether to guns, gays, abortion, or immigrants). Unfortunately, these are just the kinds of issues that arouse the most passion and, hence, have the biggest impact on both voting and get-out-the-vote efforts. And they are generally the issues Democrats try to avoid.

If you cede the contentious issues, you cede passion to the other side. And given that people vote with their “guts,” if you cede passion, you ultimately concede elections.

Republicans go straight for these gut issues, and they now have the confidence that they can do so even when support for their position is in the range of 30 percent, as is the case with their absolutist stance on abortion (that abortion is murder and should be illegal under all circumstances) and guns (that the right to bear arms is inviolable, no matter what the death toll). Democrats usually don’t contest them, the public never hears a compelling counternarrative, and public opinion gradually shifts to the right.

If you understand how networks work, you understand that candidates should never avoid anything—particularly when the other side is talking about it. Doing so gives the opposition exclusive rights to the networks that create and constitute public opinion.

HUNTING FOR PRINCIPLES

If ever there was an issue on which Americans are of two minds, it is guns. Most Americans believe in the Second Amendment, but most Americans also support a host of restrictions on gun sales and ownership. In the 2004 pre-election Harris poll, slightly more than half of Americans reported favoring stricter

gun laws, but far fewer—only one in five—wanted to relax the current laws. (When Harris framed the question more specifically in terms of *handguns*, the percentages became even more lopsided, closer to 3-to-1 in favor of stricter regulations.) Only a small majority, however, supports tougher gun regulations, and many of these people are clustered in large urban areas and on the coasts. This is one of those mixed pictures that lead Democratic strategists to run for the hills.

Al Gore epitomized Democrats’ discomfort with guns in an exchange with Bush in their second presidential debate in 2000:

MODERATOR: So on guns, somebody wants to cast a vote based on your differences, where are the differences?

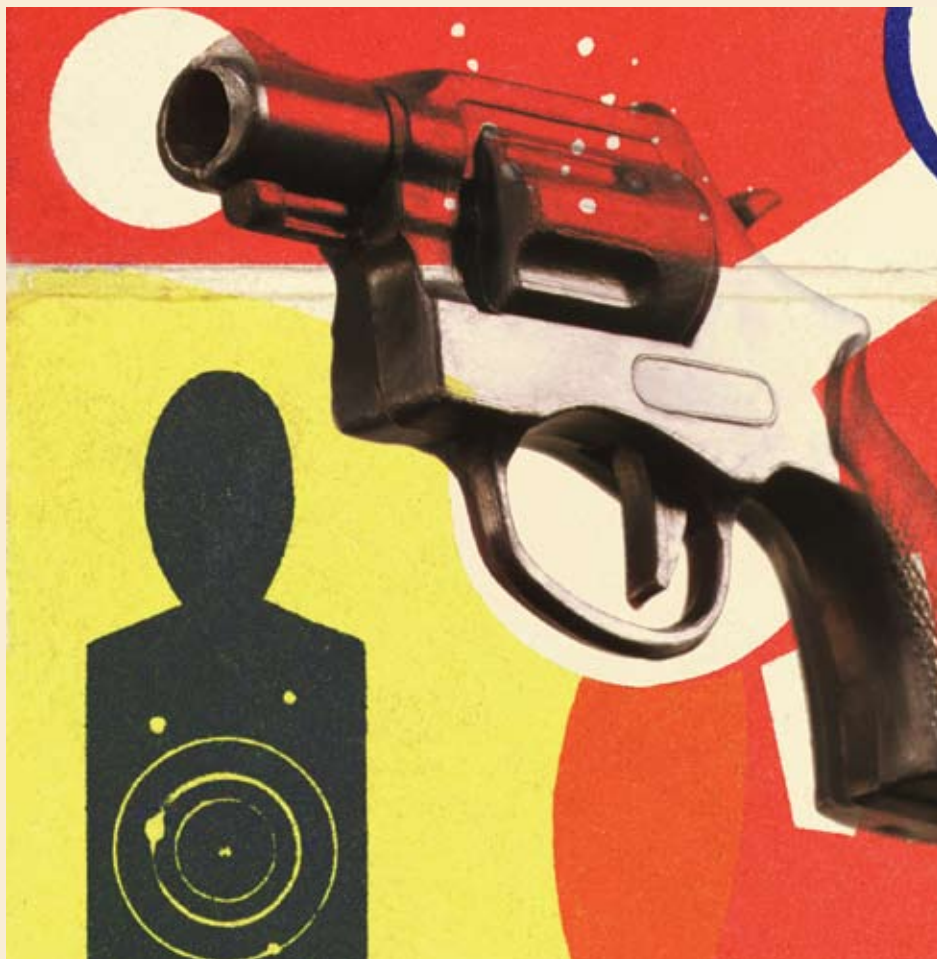
GORE: ... I am for licensing by states of *new* handgun purchases ... because too many criminals are getting guns. There was a recent investigation of the number in Texas who got, who were given concealed-weapons permits in spite of the fact that they had records. And the *Los Angeles Times* spent a lot of ink going into that. But I am not for doing anything that would affect hunters or sportsmen, rifles, shotguns, existing handguns. I do think that sensible gun-safety measures are warranted now.

Look, this is the year—this is in the aftermath of Columbine, and Paducah, and all the places in our country where the nation has been shocked by these weapons in the hands of the wrong people. The woman who bought the guns for the two boys who did that killing at Columbine said that if she had had to give her name and fill out a form there, she would not have bought those guns.

Behind this response we can hear the whirring of the dispassionate mind—the gratuitous reference to the *Los Angeles Times*, the reference to Columbine without offering an evocative image. But what is most striking about this response is the lack of any coherent *principle* that might explain why Gore would place restrictions on new handguns but not on old ones. (Are the existing ones too rusty to kill anybody?) Nor does he justify why he is excluding hunting rifles, although the viewer can infer (correctly) that he wants to get elected.

Bush couldn’t respond to the most powerful part of Gore’s response, about the woman who had handed the guns to the Columbine shooters. So after reiterating his opposition to requiring gun purchasers even to show photo identification, he switched to a “culture of life” message (aimed at activating anti-abortion networks under the cover of guns) and a “culture of love” message (suggesting that somewhere out there there’s a child longing to be told he’s loved—which would presumably prevent massacres like Columbine). Bush’s message was not only cognitively incoherent; it was actually lifted from a phenomenally moving eulogy Gore had delivered at Columbine.

True to the dispassionate vision of the mind, Gore failed to mention that he had been at Columbine. With all their debate preparation, his campaign strategists never realized that the vice president’s best weapon on guns was that magnificent



still think it's sensible to require someone to show a photo ID to *cash a check* but that it's too much to ask that they show an ID to *buy a handgun*?

Americans do have a clear choice in this election. And it *is* about a culture of life. They can do something to honor the lives of those who died that day at Columbine. Or they can vote for a man who, as governor of Texas, signed a law allowing people to bring guns into *church*.

Although most Americans were much closer to Gore than Bush on guns in the 2000 Harris poll, they thought Bush was stronger on gun control. Although Kerry had hunted all his life, Bush was the overwhelming choice of American sportsmen, even though he'd purchased his Crawford ranch as a prop only two years before running for president—something Democrats never thought to mention in two presidential campaigns. Nor did they mention, as James Carville and Paul Begala have pointed out, that Bush had stocked his ranch's

eulogy, in which he artfully invoked “that voice [that] says to our troubled souls: peace, be still. The Scripture promises that there is a peace that passes understanding.”

Bush presented Gore with a golden opportunity to personalize the issue, to put the face of a child on it. With a response like the following, he would have placed in bold relief the extraordinary indifference implicit in Bush's response and the extremism of the conservative narrative Bush was embracing:

Governor, I walked with those shocked and grieving parents, teachers, and children at Columbine; I shed tears with them; and I delivered a eulogy that Sunday by their graveside. I remembered with them the heroism of their beloved coach and teacher Dave Sanders, who bravely led so many to safety but never made it out of the building himself. I remembered with them a young girl named Cassie Bernall, whose final words were “Yes, I do believe in God.”

I just told you how the woman who bought the guns that took the lives of Dave Sanders and Cassie Bernall wouldn't have done it if she'd just had to fill out a form and show a photo ID. And you *still* can't feel for Coach Sanders' wife and children, who'll never wrap their loving arms around him again? You *still* can't weep for Cassie's parents? You

man-made lakes with fish because the river running through it was too polluted.

These are just the kinds of facts and images that win elections. And they are just the kinds of facts and images that *should* win elections, because they tell where a candidate really stands, not just where he stands for photo ops.

This is precisely the kind of information that informs the emotions of the electorate.

GUNNING FOR COMMON GROUND

To understand the poll numbers on guns in three dimensions, you have to consider the different associations the word “gun” evokes in urban and rural America. If you prime voters who have grown up in big cities with the word “gun,” you are likely to activate a network that includes “handguns,” “murder,” “mugging,” “robbery,” “killing,” “crime,” “inner-city violence,” “machine guns,” and “criminals.” If someone in New York City is packing a piece, he isn't hunting quail.

But now suppose we prime a group of voters—let's make them men—in rural America with precisely the same word, “gun.” This time, the associations that come to mind include “hunt,” “my daddy,” “my son,” “gun shows,” “gun collection,” “rifle,” “shotgun,” “protecting my family,” “deer,” “buddies,” “beer,” “my rights”—and a host of memories that link past and

future generations. A voter who lives in a rural area knows that if an armed intruder enters his house, it could take a long time before the county sheriff arrives. The notion of being defenseless doesn't sit well with southern and rural males, whose identity as *men* is strongly associated with the ability to protect their families.

There are some voters you just can't win. As my colleagues and I discovered when we scanned the brains of partisans during the last presidential election, roughly a third of Americans' minds won't bend to the left no matter what you do or say (roughly the percent who continue to support Bush). But southern and rural voters are not unambivalent in their feelings toward guns. Rural voters have no fondness for what happened at Columbine or Virginia Tech, and they have little genuine affection for handguns or automatic weapons. If the National Rifle Association scares them into supporting semiautomatics for felons and teenagers with its slippery-slope argument about "taking away your guns," the fault lies as much with the Democratic Party, which has put such a powerful safety lock on its own values that no one knows where Democrats really stand—on this or virtually any other moral issue.

When a party finds itself courting potentially winnable voters who have seemingly incompatible associations, the first task of its strategists should be to look for two things: areas of ambivalence and ways of bridging seemingly unconnected networks to create common ground. The areas of ambivalence on guns are clear, but Democrats should be searching for the common ground that connects left to right on guns. One of the most powerful "bridging networks" revolves around law and order. A central appeal of conservative ideology is that it emphasizes the protection of law-abiding citizens. Those in the cities who want gun control for the protection of their families and those in the countryside who decry the lawlessness of the cities share the same concern: the freedom and safety of law-abiding citizens. Democrats should also connect the dots between the extremist message of the NRA and another powerful network: terrorism. You can't fight a war against terrorists if you grant them unrestricted access to automatic weapons on your own soil.

This convergence of networks suggests a simple, common-sense, principled stand on guns that Democrats could run with all over the country:

Our moral vision on guns reflects one simple principle: that gun laws should guarantee the freedom and safety of *all* law-abiding Americans. We stand with the majority of Americans who believe in the right of law-abiding citizens to own guns to hunt and protect their families. And we stand with that same majority of Americans who believe that felons, terrorists, and troubled teenagers don't have the right to bear arms that threaten the safety of our children. We therefore support the right to bear arms, but not to bear arms designed for no other purpose than to take another person's life.

SHOOTING BLANKS

At Virginia Tech, we witnessed another Terri Schiavo moment, when Democrats could have asserted a progressive moral alternative to an extremist narrative of the far right. But once again, they cowered in the corner, hoping to convince the American public that they're *almost* as right as the Republicans. Unfortunately, you never win elections by being almost as principled as the other side. If only one side is talking about its values, its candidate—not the moral runner-up—will win over voters.

With the polls strongly at their backs, Democrats had a historic opportunity to turn the Republicans' indifference to the suffering at Virginia Tech into a moral condemnation, and to put every Republican in Congress on record as caring more about the blood-soaked dollars of the NRA than about the lives of our children. Instead, they turned tail and ran, fearing they'd be branded as "anti-gun" and pushed down the slippery slope the NRA has used to pick them off at the ballot box for years: "*They want to take away your gun.*"

But you only have to worry about getting branded and being pushed down slippery slopes if you're playing checkers while the other side is playing chess—worrying about their next move when you should be anticipating six moves ahead. Democrats didn't do what they knew was the right thing because of their concerns about the political fortunes of red-state Democrats like Heath Shuler in North Carolina. But they wouldn't have had to worry—and they would have picked up a lot of "security moms" and plenty of dads—if they had simply put *Shuler* in front of the camera, flanked by a couple of pro-gun Democrats like Montana Senator Jon Tester, with a hunting rifle over his left shoulder and an M-16 over his right, armed with a simple message:

This [pointing to the gun on his left] is a rifle.

This [the gun on his right] is an assault weapon.

People like you and me use this one [left] to hunt.

Criminals, terrorists, and deranged teenagers use this one [right] to hunt police officers and our children.

Law-abiding citizens have the right to own one of these [left].

Nobody has the right to threaten our kids' safety with one of these [right].

Any questions?

If you can't speak the truth and win elections, you need to learn another language. The language that wins elections is the language of the heart. **TAP**

Drew Westen is a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Emory University. This article is adapted from his new book, The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation, Copyright © 2007 (to be published in June). Reprinted by arrangement with Public Affairs (www.publicaffairsbooks.com), a member of the Perseus Books Group. All rights reserved.

Culture & Books

"Critics are now championing the projects as havens of low- and middle-income housing in a city rapidly outpricing the working class."

— PAGE 59



MEDIA

HOLLYWOOD VALUES SAVE AMERICA!

From Mel Gibson to Ann Coulter to Don Imus, the backlash against celebrity bigots has rolled eastward.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

AFTER RADIO SHOCK JOCK DON Imus was forced off the air for comments no worse than many he'd made over the past 35 years, his long-time sidekick, Bernard McGuirk, wondered where along the way the rules had changed. The answer was probably Malibu, California, where Mel Gibson was pulled over last July for driving errati-

cally after a night out with some buxom blondes, setting in motion a chain of events that would permanently change the contours of the public debate in America and ultimately lead to Imus' ouster.

Gibson's drunken explosion at the police officer who arrested him touched one of the deadliest third rails of Hollywood politics: the specter of anti-Semitism within

the film industry, which has been, for nearly a hundred years, one of the most hospitable sectors for American Jews. "Fucking Jews ... The Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world!" the multi-million-dollar producer of *The Passion of the Christ* reportedly spat at L.A. County Sheriff's Deputy James Mee, before asking, "Are you a Jew?" Gibson was thrown into a detox cell at a Los Angeles County Sheriff's station to sober up.

In the ensuing outcry, Gibson apologized and admitted that his life had been spiraling out of control for some time due to alcoholism. He sought rehabilitation treatment immediately, and apologized publicly: "I am deeply ashamed of everything I said, and I apologize to anyone who I have offended."

The Gibson incident was the butt of late-night television jokes for months to come, and even the basis for an episode of *Law and Order*; more importantly, the basic storyline that Gibson premiered was rapidly incorporated into the Hollywood narrative library. "Past-peak star says something biased and is forced to prostrate himself in apology and leave the public stage" joined such hardy Hollywood social scripts as "married actor leaves wife for ingenue" and Johnny-come-lately "hott nobody releases sex tape, becomes a celebrity, and flashes crotch while exiting car." Call it "Hollywood Values, Too Real for TV Division."

Hollywood being Hollywood, entertainment reporters keyed up for the next big hit in the Gibson genre. They didn't have long to wait. In October, actor Isaiah Washington reportedly got into an on-set fight with his *Grey's Anatomy* co-star Patrick Dempsey, a.k.a. "Dr. McDreamy." The show was ABC's No. 1 draw and had been the subject of countless fawning profiles on its way to transforming a cast of unknowns and character actors into major stars. Washington was complain-



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—A. B. Yehoshua

The University of Chicago Press
www.press.uchicago.edu

ing about T.R. Knight's late arrival on set, and called him a "faggot," which sparked the fight.

Gossip Web sites and *The National Enquirer* reported the fracas, and gay-rights groups started a national campaign to force ABC to fire Washington. Knight, forced out of the closet by the controversy, took to the pages of *People* magazine. ABC executives hunkered

BACK ON THE EAST COAST, THE POLITICAL world was developing its own version of the new narrative. As is typical for Washington, a k a "Hollywood for Ugly People," the local version had much lower production values. Instead of glamorous actors or grizzled has-beens, it featured a round-faced senator with a big grin who was partial to cowboy boots and the Confederate flag, and who had called a

What began last summer as an effort by Hollywood liberals to defend their community's values has morphed into an unstoppable pan-media narrative.

down and forbade the cast from talking about the incident. That—and the arrival of an even more compelling contender for top social drama—quieted public outrage against Washington, though it continued to simmer.

That contender: Michael Richards, the actor who played Cosmo Kramer in NBC's 1990s hit *Seinfeld*. Richards was performing at The Laugh Factory, a Hollywood comedy club, where, after being heckled, he launched into a tirade against an African American in the audience. "Fifty years ago we'd have you upside down with a fucking fork up your ass!" he screamed. "You can talk, you can talk; you're brave now, motherfucker! Throw his ass out!" Richards said, before calling the man the n-word five times in a row, with real rage in his voice. Gossip blog TMZ instantly provided video and a transcript of Richards, along with a photo essay on "Prejudiced Celebs."

The public reaction was swift, furious, and outraged, and Richards quickly began a tour of contrition on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, where he was introduced by Jerry Seinfeld. Richards then apologized directly to the father confessors of American racial politics, the Reverends Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, and went on Jackson's radio show to discuss the incident. The drama was national news and played for more than a week.

After that, the national press knew it had a hit on its hands. Audiences loved it. The new script was a winner.

young brown-skinned political tracker with a video camera the odd-sounding, previously unknown word "macaca." In mid-August 2006, as Hollywood was up in arms about Mel Gibson, Democrats in Washington and Democratic northern Virginia took up arms against Virginia Senator George Allen's slur (macaca is a derogatory French term meaning "monkey," which some have said Allen picked up from his French Tunisian mother) against the Indian-American who had filmed him.

Allen at first refused to apologize. Then he apologized halfheartedly. Then his campaign manager, Dick Wadhams, appeared to retract the apology. So Allen apologized all over again. Ten days after news of his remark first hit, the controversy had only increased. Allen broke down and called the tracker for his opponent, Jim Webb, to apologize directly. But even that did not end the story.

Because the political arena is less responsive to public opinion than the commercial one, and because it operates by different rules, Allen could not rescue his career by a brief retreat from the public eye, or even by a decisive apology. To save his job, he had to persuade voters to reelect him, despite their newfound suspicions. That meant he'd have to weather two-and-a-half more months of reporters digging up ever-more dirt about his racist past—including college-football teammates who recalled Allen's use of the n-word—while trying to soothe voters in the state. It was as if Richards had

to go back to The Laugh Factory every single night for two and a half months to try to change the audience's mind.

It didn't work. Between the macaca fracas and the overall national turn against the Republican Party, Allen couldn't stave off Webb. And for the first time in political history, a sitting southern Senator lost his election over a negative racially charged remark. The national audience cheered.

The serialized racial drama took a hiatus in December, but came back with a bang the next season. The Isaiah Washington story reemerged at the Golden Globes in January, after Washington brought up the fall's "faggot" incident in the pressroom and denounced media reports about it as "vile" lies. This time, ABC could not quash the outrage. T.R. Knight took to the *Ellen DeGeneres Show* to say, "He referred to me as a faggot ... Everyone heard it," while cast mate Katherine Heigl fought back tears as she angrily told *Access Hollywood*: "[Washington] needs to just not speak in public. Period." Washington, whose career was on the line, did the only thing he could do: He apologized and entered rehab for "emotional problems."

It was this act that finally caused the emerging political story about bigoted political figures to merge with the now-solid Hollywood script about bigoted celebrities being capable, through rehab, of seeing the light. In February, political columnist Ann Coulter mocked the Hollywood narrative in front of 6,000 conservatives at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, D.C. "I was going to have a few comments about John Edwards, but you have to go into rehab if you use the word 'faggot,'" she told the audience.

Once again, the reaction was swift and furious, and not just from the left—young writers on the right who had grown embarrassed by conservative bigotry also voiced their dismay. Several newspapers dropped Coulter's column, as did one major conservative organization, and advertisers fled from her Web site. Within a week, even conservative stalwarts at GOPUSA were suggesting that she would benefit from "some profes-

sional help" herself, and columnist Cliff Kinkaid dubbed her insult "the political equivalent of Britney Spears shaving the hair off her head." When CPAC offered a six-DVD set of conference highlights in April, Coulter's entire performance had been left on the cutting-room floor.

What began last summer as an effort by Hollywood liberals to defend their community's values against actors who didn't realize that bigotry is only acceptable when it is expressed by a character has morphed into an unstoppable pan-media narrative about fighting bigotry among the rich and famous, be they celebrated actors or despised political celebrities.

In retrospect, the outrage Don Imus provoked when he nastily mocked the Rutgers women's basketball team for being "nappy-headed hos" appears only too predictable: The rules had been changing since the previous July; Imus, as both an entertainer and someone who

kept a foot in the political realm, ought to have noticed this. Instead, his comments sparked outrage and condemnation in both Hollywood and Hollywood for Ugly People, with attacks coming from celebrities (Oprah Winfrey, Al Roker) and political figures (Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton) alike. Panicked advertisers fled as traditional civil-rights organizations put pressure on Imus' employers to fire him. And Imus soon discovered that all the apologies in the world—even to Al Sharpton, even on his radio show—couldn't put his reputation back together again. He was going to have to retreat from the public stage for a time. Imus was dropped, first from his TV spot with MSNBC and then from his \$10 million radio gig with CBS.

And so the latest episode in the serial drama came to a satisfying conclusion, tied up with a neat little bow and a reaffirmation of Hollywood Values. **TAP**

BOOKS

THE URBAN FUTURE THAT FAILED

FROM A CAUSE TO A STYLE: MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE AMERICAN CITY BY NATHAN GLAZER Princeton University Press, 292 pages, \$24.95

BY HILARY BALLON

NATHAN GLAZER'S NEW BOOK is a reminder of how distant even the recent past can seem. *From a Cause to a Style* collects 11 essays that were mostly written in the 1990s yet continue to reflect a disillusionment with modernist architecture rooted in the 1960s.

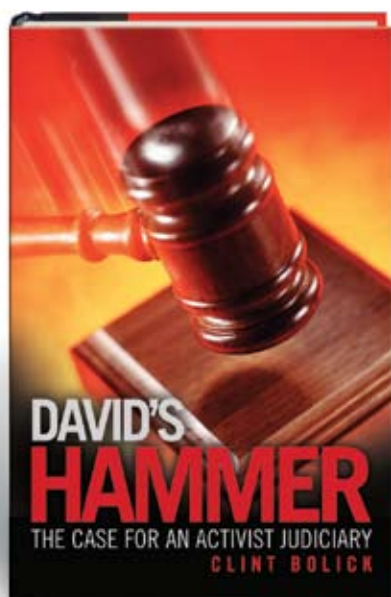
A sociologist long interested in urban planning, Glazer has two primary concerns: the twin failures of modernism as public architecture and as urbanism. Observers of the contemporary scene will encouragingly note that architecture has learned from modernism's mistakes and moved on. Given his commitment to the social agenda of architecture, Glazer might well be heartened by the goals of landscape urbanism and other new approaches to urban design. These

essays are productively read as historical responses to a bygone era, not as fresh responses to recent trends. Nevertheless, the core worry of the book remains pertinent today: how to relate architecture and planning to the aims of social policy. And it is valuable to hear the voice of a public intellectual reinsert architecture and urban design into social criticism.

The argument in the first section of the book, "The Public Face of Architecture," hinges on a formalist critique of modernist architecture. Glazer believes that the stripped-down elements of the International Style and its offspring—the flat roof, undecorated cornice, unarticulated window and entrance—cannot fulfill the symbolic requirements of monuments and in particular of memorials. He approvingly quotes the critic and his-

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—MARCUS COLE
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torian Lewis Mumford: “If it is a monument, it is not modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.” This view was most relevant in the mid-20th century, and it is telling that Glazer’s examples are situated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., a very particular context. Not only has the aesthetic power of modernist architecture been amply proven, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the defining memorial of our times, solved the problem formulated by Mumford.

Glazer’s preoccupation with style seems misguided. As the evolution of the September 11 memorial at Ground Zero suggests, constituency concerns and budgetary pressures now shape monuments in more powerful ways than the designers do. But peeling away Glazer’s antimodernist bias to get at the core values animating these spirited essays, you find an important humanist value: a belief in the rhetorical power and symbolic presence of buildings. A monument, he writes, is meant to celebrate, to recall, and to honor. Agreed, and to this list we might add a range of other emotional effects. Yet one suspects that in his criticism of modernist architecture, Glazer is mistakenly equating a set of physical forms that he calls the modernist style with a social dynamic, namely the disinvestment in and erosion of the public realm.

The second axis of the book concerns the failure of modernist architecture to design an attractive city and to match the complexity of the historic urban fabric. “If modernism rejected the monument,” he writes, “would not its role in the rebuilding of cities, in the expression of the public’s desires, be sharply reduced?” Here, I think, Glazer takes an illogical step in his reasoning; in retrospect, we can say that modernism superbly handled the problem of monumentality, but not that of urbanism.

In making his case against modernist urbanism, Glazer overstates the power of design and discounts other factors determining how designs are realized and inhabited. Public policy sets funding and tenant-eligibility requirements. Reduced budgets and high labor costs result in poor-quality construction, inadequate maintenance, and no landscap-



A Modern Monument: Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial at its dedication, November 1982.

ing. Government regulations, despite bureaucratic language, shape housing projects, as Federal Housing Administration requirements certainly did. The architect’s choice of ornamental language is far less important than these influences. The key problem is the inadequate investment in public architecture, not how the buildings look. Though Glazer knows this, his essays emphasize style and treat architectural decisions as the critical ones. Faith in the power of architecture drives his critical perspective, notwithstanding his disillusionment.

Glazer holds that public housing undermined the social aims of architectural modernism. He evokes the tragic and by-now-familiar arc from social optimism in the 1930s, when public housing was first built to improve slum conditions, to defeat, marked by the demolition of housing projects beginning with Pruitt-Igoe in 1972 and propelled by the federal HOPE VI program.

But the essay “What Happened in East Harlem” offers a timely alternative reading of this history. Glazer grew up in East Harlem, where the tenement blocks he called home were replaced in the 1940s by a superblock and public-housing project. On a visit to East Harlem, rather than nostalgically longing for a lost home, he is impressively clear-eyed about the changes in his old neighbor-

CHARLES PEREIRA / AP IMAGES

hood. Though critics attack the lavish provision of open space in housing projects, Glazer sees a successful low-income community with well-maintained open spaces. He shifts attention from physical design to the broader economic and social forces that affect the built environment. Although implicitly sympathetic to Jane Jacobs' model of urbanism, Glazer is disappointed by the modest urban strategies—preservation, New Urbanism, and community advocacy—it bequeathed. In East Harlem, where rehabilitation has allowed for creeping gentrification, he anticipates a not-so-distant future when middle- and upper-middle-class residents will encircle the public-housing projects. No longer seen as symbols of urban failure, public housing will enable East Harlem “to hold onto its working-class character in the midst of a changing city.”

This perspective has surfaced in recent months regarding other large-scale projects such as Stuyvesant Town and Starrett City, and it marks an important shift. Instead of denouncing them as overscaled, single-income enclaves, critics are now championing the projects as havens of low- and middle-income housing in a city rapidly outpricing the working class.

Glazer's progressive values emerge most forcefully in the book's closing essays, where he laments the professionalization of planning, its abandonment of social vision and turn to bureaucratic procedure. Planners have not always been quite as invisible as he indicates. In the 1950s and '60s, urban renewal gave rise to a cohort of big-picture, high-profile planners, men such as Edmund Bacon and Edward Logue armed with ideas and federal subsidies. In recent decades, though, planning has become less visionary and ambitious, and nowhere has that retreat been more evident than in New York. Glazer argues that despite its reputation for remaking itself, New York has become an old city, which casts a smaller shadow on the American scene than it once did because it has failed to plan and make the infrastructural improvements that are essential for a world city—no subway expansion, no new bridges, no water mains. The oldness of New York is certainly striking in comparison with

the megacities in South America, Asia, and Africa where raging urbanization has outpaced infrastructure.

But a new wind is blowing in New York. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his planning team of Daniel Doctoroff and Amanda Burden have resurrected the public face of planning and infrastructure with an initiative called PlaNYC 2030. Although the political system does not reward long-term projects, New York may be on the threshold of a

turnaround. And if that effort can succeed in New York, there may well be new receptivity elsewhere to Glazer's plea to revitalize planning and his desire to “unleash the productive forces, but then govern them by a larger sense of the public and common good.” **TAP**

Hilary Ballon is professor of art history at Columbia University and the editor of The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.

BOOKS

WHAT WE ALL ESCAPED

THE WORLD HITLER NEVER MADE BY GAVRIEL D. ROSENFELD
Cambridge University Press, 536 pages, \$30.00

HITLER'S BENEFICIARIES: PLUNDER, RACIAL WAR, AND THE NAZI WELFARE STATE BY GÖTZ ALY, Metropolitan Books, 431 pages, \$32.50

BY EZRA KLEIN

VIEWED AS AN OUTCOME OF all history, our reality has a gossamer-like fragility. It is a set of rarities stacked atop freak occurrences, inset with both miracles and catastrophes. Things had to turn out *some* way, of course, and this way may be as likely as any other. But that is a distressingly unsatisfactory explanation, for both its insinuation of a capricious world and its blithe disregard for human agency. How much for the better if we could rewind the tape, cut a little here, reshoot that scene there. We need not live in that reality—just see it, learn from it, derive or disprove the constants that we hope or fear exert some overarching influence and that make history more than the product of infinite probabilities endlessly multiplying against one other.

Such ruminations are all the more acute around epochal moments that threatened radical shifts in history's trajectory. Foremost among these, at least in modern times, is World War II. Hitler could have won by virtue of a technological breakthrough or different tactics, but what sort of world would have resulted? What sort of world would we—the occupied, the defeated—have

been forced to accept? Would we have accommodated evil or overcome it?

These are the questions explored in “allohistorical,” or alternate history, fiction. What was once the province of Marvel Comics' beloved “What If?” series (“What if Captain America ran for president?”) is now a sprawling genre encompassing works from authors as varied as Philip Roth and Philip K. Dick—writers who imagine our world, just as it is, until a crucial juncture where the road not taken becomes the path history barrels down.

Gavriel Rosenfeld's *The World Hitler Never Made* is the first scholarly examination of allohistorical fiction about World War II, and it's an adept effort. Rosenfeld is right to deem the literature worthy of study, as many of the books in this genre offer rich insights into the psychological and intellectual conditions of the times when they were written. He takes as his guiding principle that speculation about the past “really [expresses] our feelings about the present,” and with that in mind, constructs a detailed chronology of the waxing and waning self-images revealed by the allohistories published during

the postwar decades in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States.

But speculating about the past isn't merely a commentary about the present; it's also an inquiry into human nature and history. The works revolving around visions of Nazi occupation show this most clearly, as in the books of Roth and Dick, which reflect the writers' dark views of the human capacity to normalize tyranny. Indeed, the literature that Rosenfeld interprets as making veiled judgments about nationalism or Western exceptionalism often hinges not on national character but on individual grace, as in Noël Coward's *Peace in Our Time*, which explores the experience of conquered Britons through the reactions of a handful of pub-goers, and where salvation comes from the willingness of individuals to recognize and destroy evil disguised as lawful authority.

Such uplifting visions, however, do not account for Nazism's existence in the first place. What reason for optimism is there, given that Hitler was democratically

elected and widely supported? What makes the British or the Americans so different that under similar circumstances they would not countenance the same evil? Within counterfactual fiction, the attempts to explain *how* the German people could have accepted Hitler's ascent have been largely unsatisfactory, amounting to little more than buck-passing. Allohistorical fiction by German writers tends to underscore Hitler's role as the unique, vile force that set Germany down its path; Rosenfeld interprets this literature as an attempt to "de-emphasize [Germans'] own historical culpability for Nazism." Anglo-American portrayals, conversely, tend to blame the German people, thus circumscribing the moral significance of his rise.

A MORE COMPELLING ACCOUNT OF the Nazi regime, based on new historical research, comes from the German historian Götz Aly's book *Hitler's Beneficiaries*. German complicity in Nazism, he argues, was driven by self-

interest. The Nazis engaged in "a state-sponsored campaign of grand larceny," channeling the resources of murdered Jews and conquered lands into the German welfare state.

Under the final prewar budget of Germany, the Jewish emigration tax and other anti-Jewish measures accounted for more than 9 percent of the country's total revenues. The genocide against the Jews involved the liquidation of their properties and possessions, which were classified by the state as "abandoned assets" and became "property of the general government." And beyond assets such as businesses and homes, stolen goods of all kinds were redirected back to the German marketplace, creating a surplus of high-demand consumer items that stabilized prices during an economically uncertain moment of the war. The state, moreover, sold the confiscated possessions at bargain prices, creating a direct benefit for vast swaths of the German populace.

Vanquished lands were forced to finance not only the war but the living standards of Germans back home. As one stern government communiqué to an overly lenient occupation official warned, "Our fundamental standpoint [is] that the costs of occupying a given area are to be borne by the area itself." Conquered countries were forced to pay a yearly "contribution for military protection," as well as monthly bills for the services of the soldiers who were so kindly guarding their lands.

Here, too, the scale of the thievery astonishes. One Reichsbank study esti-

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mated that the first year of occupation cost Holland 180 percent of its normal state revenues, Belgium 200 percent, France 211 percent, and Norway 242 percent. When this extortion proved insufficient, and fears of inflation emerged, the Germans began liquidating the assets of Jews in the occupied countries as well.

Indeed, Aly suggests that this murderous redistribution became not merely an effect of the war but a driving force behind it. In his telling, Germany's living standards were built atop a Ponzi scheme of sorts. Writes Aly:

After every military victory, no matter how quick and relatively painless for German forces, the same problems with finances and food supplies kept cropping up ... [this] meant that the Nazi leaders had to push ahead with further military expansionism. Any hesitancy would have led to the end of the regime.

The picture Aly paints is unsettling, because it suggests that the Nazis were able to buy popular acceptance of evil for a low price. As he concludes:

The Nazi leadership did not transform the majority of Germans into ideological fanatics who were convinced they were part of the master race ... [Rather], as the state was transformed into a gigantic apparatus for plundering others, average Germans became unscrupulous profiteers and passive recipients of bribes. Soldiers became armed couriers of butter.

To be sure, Aly thinks that Nazism would have exhausted itself as it ran up against the limits of what it could conquer, and as its debts came due. But that is to say it would have failed not because the Germans would have rediscovered their innate aversion to evil but because they would no longer receive its fruits. What a dispiriting conclusion if the human constant is not goodness or empathy but selfishness, and if the relative harmony of the current era is nothing more than a byproduct of capitalism proving itself more profitable than world war. **TAP**

BOOKS

THE SUNLIGHT SOLUTION

FULL DISCLOSURE: THE PERILS AND PROMISE OF TRANSPARENCY

BY ARCHON FUNG, MARY GRAHAM, AND DAVID WEIL,
Cambridge University Press, 282 pages, \$28.00

BY PAUL STARR

PUBLIC POLICY HAS ITS FASHIONS—styles of government that come and go—but now and then there are genuine and durable strategic advances in how we attack public problems. In recent years, Congress and state and local governments have responded to a wide variety of concerns by adopting the same promising idea: Require businesses and public agencies to disclose information about their performance so that consumers can make smarter choices about what they buy, and citizen groups and the press can identify and publicize organizational failures and push for improvements.

In their new book, *Full Disclosure*, Archon Fung, Mary Graham, and David Weil call these measures “targeted transparency policies,” and according to their count, the federal government alone adopted 133 of them from 1996 to 2005. Alarm about SUV rollovers, for example, led Congress to establish a rating system for automobile rollover risks. Environmental worries led to mandatory disclosure of drinking-water contaminants by water authorities. Educational concerns generated requirements for measures of school performance. In response to the Enron scandal, Congress tightened the rules for financial reporting by corporations.

The rash of targeted transparency policies has some aspects of fashion. But, though not all the measures have worked out, there are lessons that point to a genuine advance in our strategy of government.

Louis Brandeis famously said that sunlight was “the best of disinfectants.” Targeted transparency policies aim to focus that light on key aspects of business and government so as to make both

of them more responsive to the public. Though often resisted by corporate and bureaucratic interests, such measures have cross-ideological appeal. Unlike government-imposed regulatory standards, transparency policies leave individuals free to make their own choices. Many of the policies can be justified as helping markets to work more effectively, while others generate social pressure for change and improve democratic accountability. In some cases, the mere anticipation of bad publicity or lost revenue may be enough to get corporations and government agencies to remedy the problems.

Yet such measures can also be a substitute for effective action. The information disclosed to the public may be murky, misleading, or inaccessible. Consumers may be unswayed by data, perhaps because they feel they have no real alternatives. Or the institutions may simply not respond in the way that policy-makers expected.

Drawing on 18 case studies—including disclosure rules for corporate finance, campaign finance, mortgage lending, workplace hazards, toxic releases, plant closings, nutritional labeling, school performance, restaurant hygiene, and terrorism-threat levels—*Full Disclosure* provides a wide-ranging and systematic analysis of targeted transparency in the United States (with some additional discussion of global mechanisms, such as international disease surveillance).

The book makes two key contributions: It clarifies the factors that determine whether policies are effective and it suggests that transparency measures are now entering a new phase when they can be even more useful to the public than in the past.

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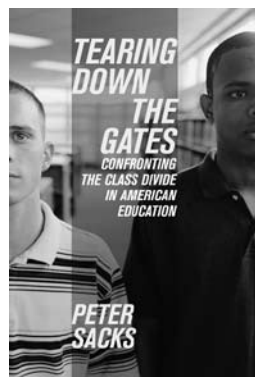
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ency policies produce accurate information that gets integrated into the decision-making routines of consumers, investors, and citizens. For example, because Congress required that the ratings for rollover risks be conspicuously printed on new-car stickers, buyers saw the information at the point when it could sway their decisions—and the auto industry responded by improving vehicle stability. After Los Angeles began grading restaurants for hygiene on an A-B-C scale and posting the grades conspicuously, the restaurants with poor ratings lost business—and hospitalizations for food contamination in the city declined.

Not all successful policies have their effects because of individual responses in the marketplace. For example, disclosure of mortgage-lending practices has helped community groups to demand that banks serve minority neighborhoods that they have historically avoided.

Yet many transparency policies haven't worked well at all. The water-quality reports are too complex for consumers to understand; the color-coded terrorism alerts don't have clear implications for citizens. Disclosures of plant closings come too late to affect corporate decisions, and the workers usually can't do anything about them.

Some policies are examples of what the authors call "gerrymandered transparency" as a result of special exceptions written into the laws by Congress (for example, small-business exemptions from requirements to report toxic releases). Indeed, because the transparency systems typically have serious limitations when first enacted, they are likely to succeed only if the political support for them is strong enough to sustain and strengthen them as they develop.

For transparency to work, according to *Full Disclosure*, several conditions need to be met. Those conditions include "a bridgeable information gap [contributing] substantially to risks or public service failures"; the potential for establishing generally agreed-on measures of performance; and "information users [with] the will, capacity, and cognitive tools to improve their choices."

What makes the whole subject of great

interest is the possibility that transparency policies can now be made more effective and useful than ever before.

Transparency is not a new idea. The effort to open up government itself goes back to the steps taken in the 17th and 18th centuries to publish laws, ban secret trials, and create public galleries for viewing legislative sessions. Laws requiring corporations to disclose critical information came largely in the 20th century. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 and the Security and Exchange Acts of the 1930s were key landmarks.

But it is in recent decades that transparency has come into own as a tool of public policy. Fung and his co-authors identify three waves of reform. The first-generation transparency policies of the 1960s and '70s—right-to-know laws, such as the Freedom of Information Act—gave the public access to previously restricted data and documents. Targeted transparency policies enacted in the '80s and after went a step further by requiring business and government to disclose standardized forms of information relevant to organizational performance.

More recently, a third generation of efforts has emerged that the authors call “technology-enabled collaborative transparency.” Instead of passively receiving information, consumers and the public can now actively create it by pooling their own data and experience. And in contrast to the relatively inflexible and slow systems created under targeted transparency laws, the new approach uses computers and the Internet to provide real-time information that individuals can customize for their own use.

Some steps along these lines are already being taken, but we are just at the beginning of this new phase of innovation. To deal with local environmental concerns, for example, people in a community can use handheld devices to test tap-water purity and share the data “via user-friendly graphics like those of weather forecasts.” Consumers may also be able to get information delivered to them more easily at the point of purchase. “Consumers seeking safe toys or healthy foods could zap a product’s bar code with their cell phones to see an

instant map of risks and benefits and a comparison to similar products,” Fung and his co-authors note.

Whether or not these possibilities are realized depends, as always, on overcoming the corporate and bureaucratic interests that resist accountability. As the case

studies show, some promising transparency measures were sabotaged from the outset. Even those who hope to use transparency to minimize top-down government regulation need to get politics to work well enough to lend consumers and citizens the power of sunlight. **TAP**

BOOKS

OVERHEATING: THE SEQUEL

FIGHTING FOR AIR: THE BATTLE TO CONTROL AMERICA’S MEDIA

BY ERIC KLINENBERG, Metropolitan Books, 339 pages, \$26.00

BY DAVID GREENBERG

RARE IS THE BOOK THAT CHANGES your mind about a political issue. Before reading Eric Klinenberg’s *Fighting for Air*, I shared the conventional wisdom that the growing corporate dominance of radio and TV stations, newspapers, and other media organs was bad for society, limiting the available range of news, opinion, and entertainment shows. Now, after finishing the book, I’m not so sure.

Unfortunately, my uncertainty appears to be the opposite of what *Fighting for Air* intends to instill. The book is a trumpet’s summons for protest against the monopolization of media outlets. But while it touts the seemingly virtuous goal of regulated competition, *Fighting for Air* blares its call so brassily that you wind up wondering if some of these questions aren’t more complex.

A sociologist at New York University, Klinenberg achieved renown in 2002 with his first book, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, which not only drew attention within his field but was vaulted into greater prominence that same year by one of Malcolm Gladwell’s deft social-science-made-easy pieces in *The New Yorker*. Soon, every time a city’s stifling weather lasted more than a few days, Klinenberg would pop up in the local paper explaining how heat waves affect communities.

Fighting for Air appears at first to continue Klinenberg’s study of disasters. It opens with a story of a train derailment

in North Dakota that emitted a nimbus of deadly vapors. Several residents, unaware of the toxic gases wafting through the prairie skies, were taken ill; one died. A large factor in these casualties, Klinenberg argues, was that six of the local radio stations, recently bought by the nefarious conglomerate Clear Channel (which now owns hundreds of stations across the country), were running on autopilot because the company was trying to boost profits. In other words, no one was around to warn the public.

The book goes on to mention several other disasters as proof of the negligence or callousness of the media giants, but a book-length case against media oligopolies can’t rest on a handful of freak accidents—and, as if realizing this, Klinenberg expands his case against “Big Media” to encompass much more.

His counts are many. Radio playlists have grown homogenous. Local TV channels air fake, propagandistic news segments created by the Bush administration. Black-owned stations face commercial hardships or ruin. First-rate investigative reporting seems rare. Cable-TV monopolies force consumers to pay for channels they don’t want. Clear Channel blacklisted John Lennon’s “Imagine” after September 11. The Sinclair Broadcast Group planned (but ultimately declined) to run a scurrilous anti-John Kerry documentary during the 2004 campaign. The Internet circulates malign, baseless rumors. And so on.

Fighting for Air lays these and other failings of today's media, both real and imagined, at the feet of "consolidation"—the buying up of local news outlets by chains and conglomerates. Consider: the number of individual owners of radio stations has fallen by 14 percent since 1996. Firms like Gannett gobble up local newspapers. Octopuses such as Viacom hoard cable-TV stations, publishing houses, and film distributors. Even the world of quirky, youth-oriented alternative urban weeklies is now succumbing to domination by the voracious Village Voice Media.

Certainly there's a *prima facie* case to be made that this consolidation has contributed to some of the developments that Klinenberg laments. But surely not all of them. The spread of conspiracy theories, shoddy arguments, and nonsense on the Internet, for instance, stems more from the glut of amateur sites uncontrolled by professional news organizations than from the flaws of the established players. Some conditions, like the trashiness of local TV news, are

perennial complaints, while others, like the supposed demise of muckraking, are unsubstantiated. Still others—including some of the beefs Klinenberg has with Clear Channel and Sinclair—are partisan in nature, reflections of his unhappiness with the ideological choices these companies' executives are making, not inherent problems with bigness itself.

Most of us, in short, would agree that a wider diversity of owners should provide a greater diversity of content, at least theoretically. But the book's kitchen-sink indictment against Big Media undermines its credibility by leaving it unclear which of the enumerated problems might be solved by new regulation. No single line of argument develops, leaving *Fighting for Air* not just unpersuasive on many counts but also hard for the lay reader to follow.

Ultimately, I think, this book has conflicting aspirations—to scholarly disinterestedness, to journalistic exposure, and to political advocacy. On the first count, it relies too heavily on anecdotes and is too erratic in its use of evidence

to lay claim to the sort of academic rigor that would clinch the case for reform. I'm no footnote fetishist, but it's confusing to see so many quotations, statistics, and unequivocal claims about controversial matters go without any attribution. Klinenberg writes at one point:

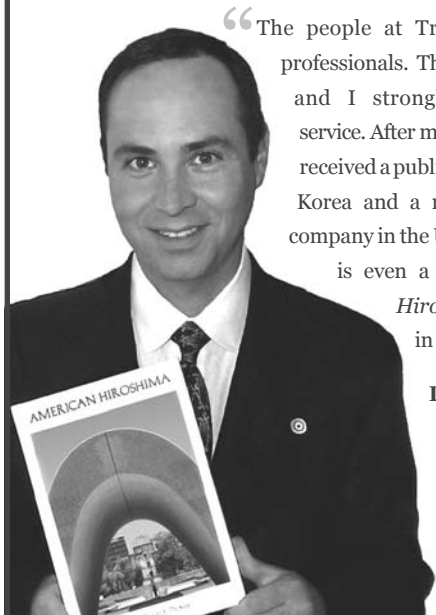
Much of the FCC's research [in support of deregulation] was founded on questionable assumptions, including the fact that its models were based more on highly disputable market predictions than on actual market data about media use, resulting in hard data built on soft foundations.

In a book that presents itself as scholarship, shouldn't such a claim require a footnote?

Yet *Fighting for Air* can't really be called journalism either, despite some trappings thereof. It presents characters, for example, with snippets of description emulative of magazine profiles. ("Jen is a media maven," Dobkin, a hipster with

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an MBA from New York University, told me while sipping mint tea in a SoHo café near his apartment.”) These asides don’t bring the book’s characters to life as a skilled pen portraitist would, nor do they substitute for the kind of in-depth reporting that a journalist’s book would offer.

Neither reportage nor analysis, *Fighting for Air* thus belongs at bottom to

groups—a danger also faced by similar lobbies focused on procedural issues like those seeking expanded ballot access for minor parties, easier voter registration, and campaign-finance reform. By speaking in the language of procedural fairness or democracy—when they really want to strengthen the hand of the left—these groups court disappointment, if not feelings of betrayal.

What’s needed is less true believing and more careful thought about which changes in media policy are likely to level the playing field.

another genre: the political manifesto. Passionately argued on behalf of a cause that the author supports with evident gusto, it’s a salvo in the increasingly contentious fight over media ownership. This fight has grown especially fevered in recent years, especially since 1996. That year—the fulcrum of this book and of what’s now called the “media reform” movement—President Clinton signed the Telecommunications Act. The law relaxed regulatory caps that had limited the number of media outlets any company could own, both nationwide and within a single market, and it has allowed companies like Clear Channel and Sinclair to metastasize. The result, as Klinenberg suggests (not without basis), has been an era of heightened corporate irresponsibility. Yet he identifies a silver lining, too. Much as *Roe v. Wade* galvanized the anti-abortion right, the 1996 telecom law spurred a wave of left-wing activism urging new regulation of media ownership—a wave about which Klinenberg writes admiringly and to which his book itself belongs.

This movement is making arguments that deserve a hearing. On certain issues it has gained support from conservative groups such as the National Rifle Association and Brent Bozell’s Parents Television Council. Such bipartisan alliances promise to provide a counterweight to the corporate behemoths that exert great influence in George W. Bush’s Washington.

There’s a danger, however, for the media-reform movement in aligning with such

After all, the fairest rules don’t always yield the outcomes that we desire. Media regulation (or a higher voting rate, or new parties, or caps on political donations) may create a more “democratic” system, but in that new, robust democracy, the Limbaughs may dominate the news, progressive mavericks may suffer ostracism, quality journalism may languish, and the American people may return purveyors of resent-

ment and militarism to the White House.

No doubt, the laws and regulations governing the media need constant supervision and frequent revision. Klinenberg usefully identifies and totes up a host of areas in which new measures might check corporate control. With his comrades in the media-reform movement, he’s right to spotlight unnoticed ways that the rules of the game can rig the outcome in favor of the wealthy, the well-connected, or the reactionary. What’s needed next, however, is less awareness raising, true believing, and drumbeating, and more careful thought—data-rich, systematic thought about which policy changes are likely to level the playing field, which won’t do much of anything, and which will wind up taking what is in the end not such a bad set of arrangements and making them a whole lot worse. **TAP**

David Greenberg, a professor of journalism and media studies and of history at Rutgers University, is the author of Nixon’s Shadow and Calvin Coolidge.

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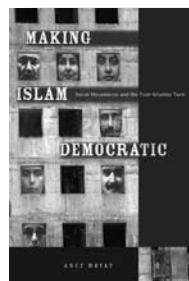
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FASTER AND FAIRER

THE AMERICAN DREAM VS. THE GOSPEL OF WEALTH: THE FIGHT FOR A PRODUCTIVE MIDDLE-CLASS ECONOMY BY NORTON GARFINKLE,

Yale University Press, 230 pages, \$22.00

GOOD CAPITALISM, BAD CAPITALISM, AND THE ECONOMICS OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY BY WILLIAM J. BAUMOL, ROBERT E. LITAN, AND

CARL J. SCHRAMM, Yale University Press, 321 pages, \$30.00

BY ANN CRITTENDEN

AS THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION implodes, the chances that a Democrat will be the next occupant of the White House are looking better every day. But what difference would that make to the economic well-being of most Americans? What economic policies would a new administration be likely to follow? More to the point, what are the chances that a change at the political helm would provide any new vision or coherent new direction for the economy?

No one can honestly answer these questions yet, but two new books offer some thoughtful insights on what would enable the American economy to grow faster *and* fairer. Their authors are economists, open to evidence rather than wedded to dogma, and they share many fundamental prescriptions, if somewhat different priorities.

The more slender, and avowedly partisan, volume is Norton Garfinkle's *The American Dream vs. the Gospel of Wealth*. The book is part of a series on the "Future of American Democracy," which under Garfinkle's editorship is examining the challenges facing the American political system today. A major concern addressed in the series is that democracy cannot survive without keeping alive the promise of economic opportunity for everyone. If the mass of average Americans come to believe that the system is rigged against them, or that the odds of attaining the dream of a decent standard of living are hopeless, their allegiance to liberty and constitutional government will inevitably unravel.

Garfinkle's principal contribution here is his spirited demolition of the fairy tale

of supply-side economics. Whether promulgated by Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich, or George W. Bush, the theory that wealth accumulated by the rich automatically trickles down to the benefit of all is so much snake oil (or "voodoo economics," as our current leader's father so trenchantly put it). According to Garfinkle, the modern debate between supply-side and demand-side economists is the contemporary version of the dispute between the Gospel of Wealth of the Gilded Age and the promise of the American dream as Lincoln and the two Roosevelts saw it. For example, in response to a sagging economy, the tax cuts advocated by the two sides are diametrically opposed: The right claims that tax cuts for the wealthy stimulate greater business investment, thus producing increased employment and growth, while liberals and progressives argue that by putting money directly into the hands of the majority of consumers, tax cuts for middle- and low-income earners will do more to stimulate production, job growth, and investment.

Fortunately, these are propositions that can be empirically tested. Looking at the period from 1951 to 2004, Garfinkle finds that of the 18 years with the lowest top marginal tax rate, only seven were also among the 18 years with the highest real growth of business investment. Moreover, six of those seven high-growth years occurred from 1994 to 1999, immediately after the Clinton administration *increased* the top marginal tax rate. In contrast, growth in business investment was typically in the low to middle range in the years of the supply-side tax cuts. Garfinkle finds no

correlation between low marginal tax rates and employment or real gains in the gross domestic product.

What he does find is historical evidence favoring the core assumption of the demand-side model: "High real growth in consumption is strongly associated with high performance of the most important economic growth variables"—that is, business investment, employment, and an increase in real GDP.

Although Garfinkle makes a strong case for the productive role of government, he doesn't address many other key determinants of growth. This is the strength of *Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity*, the work of three leading mainstream economists. Shifting the focus to economic structures, William J. Baumol, Robert E. Litan, and Carl J. Schramm offer a wide-ranging analysis of the effects of different institutions and cultural patterns. They point out that there is no such thing as "capitalism" pure and simple, a clearly defined and manifestly superior economic system. No one knows for sure what explains the great difference in growth among nations, the authors argue, and it is time for some fresh thinking on the subject. The so-called Washington Consensus of the 1990s, which led American policymakers to instruct other nations on the right economic policies, has evaporated.

In their own effort, the authors describe four different forms of capitalism, variously leading to stagnation and prosperity. The two bad forms are state-guided and oligarchic capitalism. Under the state-guided systems prevalent in many countries of Southeast Asia, governments try to guide the market and steer funds into favored sectors. Under oligarchic capitalism—common in much of Latin America, the former Soviet Union, Africa, and most of the Arab world—the bulk of wealth and power belongs to a narrow elite, and the main function of economic policy is patronage rather than growth.

Good capitalism, as Baumol and his colleagues have it, also comes in two forms: "big-firm capitalism," found in Continental Europe, Japan, South Korea, and pockets of the U.S. economy, and entrepreneurial capitalism, found in

the Anglo-American world, where large numbers of independent economic actors have an incentive to innovate in a dynamic, unplanned fashion. The ideal system, in the authors' view, contains a mix of entrepreneurial enterprises and large, established firms that can turn technical innovations into reliable, user-friendly mass products—a description that fits the United States during the prosperous, fast-growing years of the 1990s.

At bottom, according to Baumol and his colleagues, the engine of growth is innovation, and smart policy-makers will do what it takes to encourage entrepreneurs to take risks. Along with the need to make it easy to start new businesses and get out of businesses that fail (here the recent tightening of the bankruptcy laws might have negative unintended consequences), the authors argue that it is crucial to allow entrepreneurs to enjoy handsome rewards if they succeed. That imperative entails accepting some economic inequality. There is a logic to rewarding Richard Branson that doesn't apply to rewarding the CEO of, say, General Motors.

The message is clear: The two aims of growth and equality don't have to be in conflict.

Even if fortunes are made, the lion's share of the gains of innovation still spill over to the rest of society, just as innovations in one country eventually benefit others. And to make sure that the broader public does benefit from entrepreneurial capitalism, Baumol and his co-authors advocate safety nets that shield some of the victims of disruptive change, if only to prevent a backlash against free-trade policies, direct foreign investment, and the like.

Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism ends on a warning note that even the most successful entrepreneurial economies, such as the United States, can grow complacent and degenerate into something less attractive. The authors are big fans of the late economist Mancur Olson, who argued that especially in democratic countries, special-interest lobbies will produce “rent-seeking” poli-

cies that benefit particular groups at the expense of the general welfare. The oil, drug, and health-insurance industries immediately come to mind.

Things may even be worse than that, though. The book doesn't even mention the destructive economic effects of ideologically motivated policies, such as the ban on stem-cell research, which is driving innovation overseas. And what of the economic effects of the Iraq War and misguided antiterrorism policies, from the squandering of federal expenditures to the decline in the number of talented foreigners studying in the United States?

Both of these books are clear that wise government spending for such purposes as Social Security, health insurance, the GI Bill, education, and basic scientific research can help expand the economy. None of these economists see any empirical support for the conservative claim that less government and a lower overall tax burden (taxes as a percentage of GDP) translate into higher GDP growth. The American economy has actually grown faster in the era of “big government” than it did in earlier eras.

These economists remind us that economies that are both fast-growing and fair benefit us all. The two aims of growth and equality don't have to be in conflict, and the message for a new administration is clear: Don't ask Americans to sacrifice one for the other. A stronger safety net, public investments in programs that lead to greater productivity, and big rewards for those who contribute to growth in extraordinary ways—these all have to be part of the mix. But the next administration will also need the guts to stand up to the special interests that are making parts of the American economy look like a kleptocracy. As Lincoln said, government should “clear the path” for the common man. A tall order, but a necessary one. **TAP**

Ann Crittenden is a writer based in Washington, D.C.

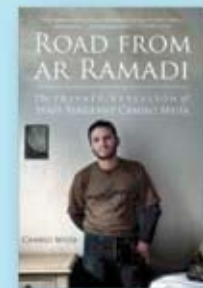
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The Fiscal Guillotine

BY ROBERT B. REICH

SHORTLY AFTER BILL CLINTON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT, he asked me to head up his economic transition team. He had promised during his campaign to “put people first” by reducing America’s two deficits: the yawning budget deficit and the growing deficit of public

investment in the nation’s schools, health care, infrastructure, and environment.

“To reclaim our future,” he intoned over and over again, “we must strive to close both the budget deficit and the investment gap.”

But the economic transition team discovered that the budget deficit was so much larger than expected that Clinton would have to put the investment deficit on hold. It remained on hold for the next ... well, it’s now been 14 years.

In the late 1990s, when the budget deficit turned into a fat budget surplus, Clinton ignored his original investment agenda. By then Alan Greenspan’s interest-rate cuts had buoyed the economy enough for most Americans to forget the long-term problems that lay behind the business cycle. Clinton was worried that Republicans would try to turn the surplus into tax cuts, so he used the ever-reliable scare tactic of telling the nation to “save Social Security first.” In 2000, as budget surpluses continued to mount, candidate Al Gore demanded that the money be put in a “lockbox.” When the surpluses overflowed even the lockbox, Gore said they should be used to reduce America’s national debt.

Thus did Clinton and Gore tee up a \$5 trillion surplus for George W. Bush to give away mostly to America’s very wealthy—without the nation ever so much as considering that it might be used to finance what Clinton and Gore were elected to do in 1992. While Repub-

licans continued to spout the nonsense of supply-side economics, Democrats became the official party of fiscal austerity. The choice became either trickle-down economics or Calvin Coolidge economics.

Fast-forward to the present. The nation’s investment deficit is now much larger than it was in 1992. The No Child Left Behind Act has raised school standards but hasn’t provided nearly enough money to implement them. Meanwhile, almost all the net growth in the labor force has come from immigrants, many of whom lack the basics. There’s less money for job training, and it’s harder for families of modest means to afford college for their kids. Millions more Americans lack health insurance than in the early ‘90s. And according to a recent report from the American Society of Civil Engineers, America’s roads, bridges, transit and drinking-water systems, and power grids are in worse shape than they were 15 years ago. On top of all this, the nation will need to invest tens of billions to cope with global warming.

Bush has put rich people and big corporations first—spending like mad

on fat contracts for military contractors, price supports for big agriculture, bloated subsidies for oil companies, and subsidized research for pharmaceutical companies. Yet measured as a percent of the gross domestic product, the current budget deficit is still less than it was in the early ‘90s. Cut the corporate welfare, raise taxes on the top, allow the deficit to move up to 3 percent of GDP, and there would be plenty of money to invest in the nation’s future.

Yet the Democrats don’t seem to know how to let go of Calvin Coolidge economics. Somehow, they got it in their heads that cutting budget deficits and balancing budgets—and maybe, if everything goes really well, creating budget surpluses that can be used to reduce the debt—is a sure-fire formula for prosperity. Flush from their midterm victory, congressional Democrats have flung themselves headlong into the guillotine of fiscal austerity. They’ve promised to shrink the deficit and enacted “pay-go” rules that make it impossible for them

to do much of anything without raising taxes, yet they’ve been unwilling to commit themselves to raising taxes on the rich.

Democratic presidential candidates, meanwhile, have been assiduously vague about how to finance their plans for affordable health care or anything else. John Edwards has suggested that he’s not overly concerned about budget deficits, but hasn’t

given any details. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have so far avoided bold ideas that would cost real money. All are careful to sound as if they believe that fiscal privation is the road to salvation.

Bill Clinton had it right in 1992: Inadequate public investment in the nation’s future will condemn us to slower growth and shrinking prosperity. It’s already happening. **TAP**

*Bill Clinton’s
public investment
program was put
on hold in 1993,
and public invest-
ment remained on
hold—well, it’s been
14 years now.*